

*Albert B. Ramsdell,
Salem, Mass.*

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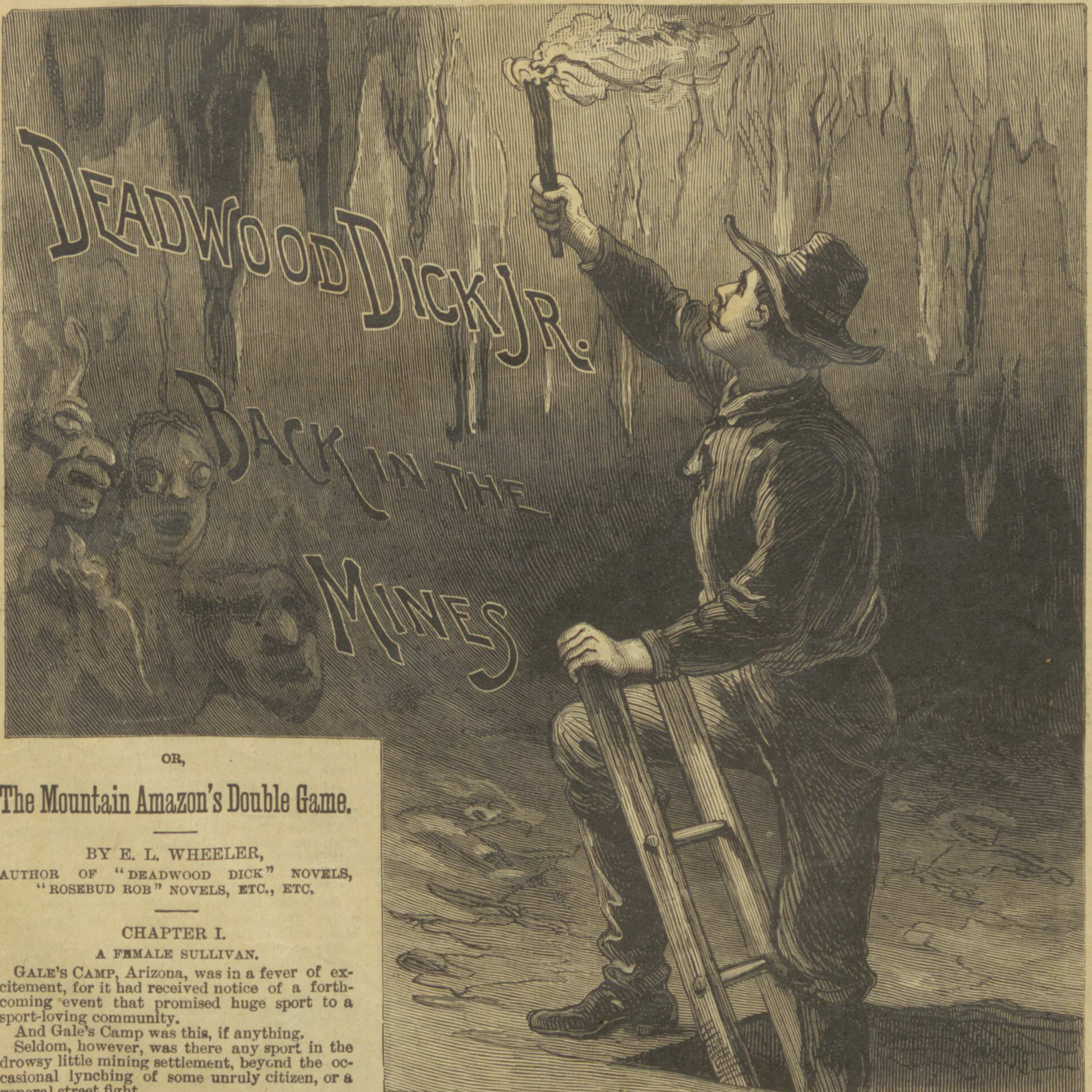
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OR,

The Mountain Amazon's Double Game.

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
"ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A FEMALE SULLIVAN.

GALE'S CAMP, Arizona, was in a fever of excitement, for it had received notice of a forthcoming event that promised huge sport to a sport-loving community.

And Gale's Camp was this, if anything.

Seldom, however, was there any sport in the drowsy little mining settlement, beyond the occasional lynching of some unruly citizen, or a general street fight.

Such events usually occurred on Sundays, as the majority of the citizens worked during the

THRUSTING THE TORCH BEFORE HIM, DICK LIFTED HIS HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE THE FLOOR AND GAZED AROUND.

week days, and had no time to fight or lounge around the saloons; for not being an over-prolific diggers, the miners of Gale's had to "hustle" to make ends meet.

The excitement above mentioned was caused by a poster, which was found early one morning tacked up on the door of what had been Mose Gale's saloon before he got the jim-jams and committed suicide.

The saloon had now been closed for several months, and was only opened occasionally, on a Sunday, for church service, or when some pilgrim died with his boots on, and it was necessary, out of common politeness, to pronounce an oration over his remains.

Such services were conducted by the "Reverend" Jacob Fern—self-styled. He was, really, an arrant knave, and the services were little short of blasphemous burlesque. The regular service was held about once a month, about the time when the miners were paid off and there was a prospect of a liberal contribution when the hat was passed around.

But to return to the posted notice. It was as follows:

"MLLE. BELLE, THE BOXER!

"THE FEMALE SULLIVAN!

"Will appear here to-night, and will meet

"ALL COMERS!

"\$5.00 to \$5,000 a side."

Such an event, at Gale's, was a novelty.

There were "game" men in the camp, but such a thing as a female puglist was an unknown quantity.

The authority on such matters at Gale's, was Bug-Juice Bob, with Jim-Jam Jake—who laid claim to the prestige of having "done up" more men than any one else in all Arizona.

Said Bug-Juice Bob:

"Thar ain't no gal can stand up before a man like me."

"Nor me," echoed Jake.

These remarks were made in the "Little Mint"—the principal saloon in Gale's Camp.

It was evening, the night when the expected girl boxer was billed to arrive, and a big crowd was on hand.

"Reverend" Fern was there, but he wore a long face. He had hoped to make something out of the coming event, by having it come off in his "church," charging a dollar a head admission. In fact, he had stolen the notice from the door of the "Mint" and transferred it to that of the vacant saloon, with this object in view.

The saloon ycleped "Little Mint" was run by a man named "Josh." What the tail-end of his name was we will not attempt to say. Nobody knew, or cared to inquire—which is a general rule in most of the Western mining-camps.

About this hour there wandered into the Mint a character never before seen at Gale's.

He was of medium physique, evidently muscular and active, and possessed of a pleasant countenance.

Scarcely any one would have suspected him of being the man he was—the hero of many a detective triumph and the victor in many a personal adventure.

It was the "only original" Deadwood Dick, Junior.

As rosy as a rosebud, and in the very prime of his strength and spirits, our Richard was "himself again" in the best sense.

Although Gale's Camp was only a small place, it boasted of citizens who had been all the way from Mexico to Alaska and back again; and when Dick stepped to the bar to register, the crowd standing about promptly walked up to inspect his autograph in order to gratify their curiosity as to who the new arrival was.

Dick was not at all disconcerted by this, for, advancing to the counter that served the double purpose of office-desk and bar, he leisurely inscribed his name upon the slate that did duty as register.

It was so seldom a stranger wandered into Gale's, that the slate was used chiefly to charge up the unpaid scores of "patrons."

Having registered, Dick lit a cigar, and was about to adjourn to the open air when he felt a tap on the shoulder.

Turning, he found himself confronted by a delegation of about the toughest-looking citizens he had ever set eyes upon.

They were headed by Jim-Jam Jake and Bug-Juice Bob.

"Well, what do you want, gents?" asked the new-comer.

"Whisky is good enough for me," replied Bob.

"I reckon I'll guzzle some gin," added Jake. "It hev been many a day since I had a ball of that article, and I'll try to digest et now."

"As for me," remarked the "Rev." Jacob Fern, "I don't often indulge in the flowing bowl, but when I do it is usually about this hour. I will take a hummer of rye for mine."

"So will we!" chimed in the remainder of the gang.

"Well, gents, there's the bar," said Dick. "Order what you want—at your own expense. I've no objections."

"But it is *your* treat."

"Not much it ain't!"

"But we do affirm and declare that it is," protested Jim-Jam Jake. "It is customary when a strange pilgrim waltzes into this burg, he shall immediately hie himself to the nearest tabernacle of Bacchus, and invite his thirsty brethren to smile. As to ther truth of this, I can refer you to the Reverend Jake Fern, here, who is probably ther best judge of whisky in the camp, and can deal himself more aces in a poker game than the smartest heathen Chinese that ever lived."

"It is incumbent on you to treat, my beloved brother," assured the "Reverend" Fern, "or else we shall be under the painful necessity of requesting you to mosey. As the guardian of this community's morals, I'd advise you to treat, and thus receive the blessings of all good citizens."

"Nary treat," declared Deadwood Dick, flatly. "I am not on the scare, my friends, nor am I on the treat; but I'll tell you what I will do."

"What's that?"

"I'll throw any man in the camp for the drinks for the party."

"I'm your man," at once responded the "Reverend" Jacob Fern, peeling off his coat. "I kin do you up so quick your teeth won't have time to chatter."

"Very well. If you do, I'll buy out this establishment and keep open house for the next six months."

The "Reverend" Fern was much the superior in point of size. He was taller and broader, and nine out of ten men would have placed their bets on him.

The citizens of Gale's, however, rather hesitated when they saw the muscles of Dick's arms.

"Do you want to bet any money on the result of the contest?" asked Dick.

"No; but I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Well?"

"I'll preach your funeral sermon."

"Not very soon, my dear sir. I'm not a corpus yet, and don't intend to be one for some time to come, thank you. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

The space cleared in the center of the room was surrounded by the crowd, in a high state of excitement.

A wrestling match now, and a prize fight impending! Verily, Gale's Camp was getting to be a place of importance, with a prospect of some day becoming a city.

The two men advanced into the improvised ring, and grappled.

The struggle was but momentary, for in that time Dick laid the "Reverend" Fern upon his back so neatly that a grunt from him could have been heard a hundred yards away.

Fern arose, rather crestfallen.

"You've won," he admitted. "I wouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't been there at the time the ungodly event transpired. Verily, thou art a Samson!"

"Well, no; but I am able to defray my funeral expenses in advance. How about that sermon?"

This caused a general laugh.

Fern had been counted as the best man in the camp, but, the easy way in which Dick handled him was amusing to his flock. His days of athletic glory were at an end—his prestige as the boss wrestler of Gale's was at an end.

And this was the condition of affairs when she appeared—she, the "female-Sullivan" who is destined to figure in these pages—the heralded Mlle. Belle.

She was unaccompanied.

She was a young woman, seemingly not over twenty, of fine figure, regular features, dark complexion and hair; and, taken as a whole, rather a prepossessing person.

The men of Gale's were not prepared to see such an Amazon.

Even the "Reverend" Fern recoiled when Mlle. Belle walked into the saloon, dressed in

man's clothes, bought a drink at the bar, and then calmly observed:

"I can whip any son of a gun in this hyar camp, fer money. First come, first served."

CHAPTER II.

FAIRLY FOUGHT.

Now it so happened that Jim-Jam Jake was in rather pugnacious mood, because he had lost his last copper in betting on the bout between the "Reverend" Fern and Deadwood Dick; so, being somewhat of a slugger himself, Jacob came promptly to the fore.

"So, you are Mlle. Belle, are ye?" he demanded.

"You bet!" was the curt response.

"And you kin lick any galoot in the camp?"

"Every day in the week!"

"For money?"

"Yes."

Jake cast his eyes over the impecunious crowd, wondering who would put up the "sugar" for him.

The "Reverend" Fern was one of the wealthiest men at Gale's, and recently won a few hundred dollars at poker.

Deadwood Dick was the only other person present who was likely to have money, unless it was the proprietor of the Mint.

Jake took off his hat, kicked it across the room, and then picked it up and passed it around, saying:

"Boyees, I'm bu'sted. Will any one donate toward backin' me?"

"Here is a ten," spoke up Deadwood Dick, producing a gold coin. "It will be worth every cent of it to see you get pummeled."

"Here is five more," added Fern. "I am not a believer in the unholy practice of prize-fighting, but I'll be hanged if I wouldn't like to see some of the whisky worked out of Jake's hide."

"Et can't be did," declared Bug-Juice Bob. "Jake has been in pickle too long."

By the time the hat had gone the rounds, a collection of thirty dollars had been obtained.

This was placed in the hands of Jim Gale, who was agreed upon as stakeholder.

Dick was appointed referee.

"Mlle. Belle, are you ready?" asked the referee.

"I am."

"Jim-Jam Jake, are you ready?"

"I will be, after I git a drink. Parson Fern, can't you stand treat, for the sake of this good and noble cause?"

Fern shook his head.

"Nary treat, Jacob. It is not becoming for a minister of the gospel to give his disciples that which destroyeth."

"You old soaker! You drink more than any man in the camp!"

"When I do indulge," returned the "Reverend" Jacob, gravely, "it is for the purpose of clearing and strengthening my brain, in order that my exhortations may be more effective and to the point. Let the fight proceed."

As Jim-Jam Jake saw no prospect of any one setting up the "red-eye," and as his credit on the slate had long since expired, he wisely concluded that the nearest approach to a drink was to whip this gentle gazelle who had come to Gale's Camp to win fame and money by knocking out the citizens.

So Jake stepped forward.

A ring had been chalked out on the floor, and all was in readiness.

Mlle. Belle was in the ring, smiling and serene. She evidently had not the least fear of defeat.

Her sleeves were rolled well up, exposing a powerful pair of arms. Her hands, too, were more masculine than feminine.

At a signal given by Dick, the fight began.

Jake secured first hit, landing one on Mlle. Belle's jaw.

This was the signal for tremendous applause from the friends of Jim-Jam.

"That's the whack!"

"Sock it to her!"

"Paralyze her!"

Such and kindred expressions came from the crowd; but they did not appear to disconcert Mlle. Belle in the least.

She sparred carefully for awhile, evincing considerable science, and then, with one terrific blow, she knocked Jake insensible to the floor.

"There! How does *that* suit you?" she demanded, turning to the crowd.

"That war splendid," declared the "Reverend" Fern.

"You bet!" cried the crowd. "Jim-Jam won't be quite so fresh in the future."

"Yes he will!" replied Bug-Juice Bob. "Ther salt never was made that will do the act of keeping Jake from being fresh."

"Who's the next man wants to be knocked out?" demanded the Amazon.

"I guess none of us," replied Fern.

"Not I, for one," Bug-Juice Bob assured.

"Nor I," from Jim Gale.

"Nor I," chorused the crowd.

With one exception—Deadwood Dick.

"I'll accommodate you," he quietly remarked.

"All right. How much do you want to wager?"

"A cool hundred."

"Very well. Put up your sugar. I am here to make money and I can't afford to pass this. By the time I have cleaned out the camp, I hope to have acquired enough wealth to retire from business."

"Maybe, by the time you have acquired all this boodle, you will have a broken head that won't be of any use to you," Dick suggested.

"Well, the money will be useful to provide me with a brass band for my funeral," was the retort.

"I should be happy to officiate on that occasion, providing the compensation for my services were liberal," put in the "Reverend" Fern. My charges are very reasonable, where I have met the deceased before."

"Well, old man, it will be a long, cold, blustering day before you get a chance to spout over my remains," said Mlle. Belle. "I have no intention of passing in my checks for years to come, and when I do, nothin' but a first-class chap with a b'iled shirt, patent-leather shoes, and a plug hat, will do for my funeral."

"Verily, I am sorry," responded Fern, "for these are hard times, and business in my line is very dull. I haven't had the pleasure of attending a funeral in over a week. That was when they lynched Pete Johnson for stealing a horse. Verily, people are not dying off as fast as they used to. It seems that the human race is advancing in longevity."

"It's a pity about you," retorted Mlle. Belle, sarcastically. "I feel so sorry for you that I am tempted to die, just to accommodate you."

The money was now put up in the hands of Jim Gale, and Dick doffed his coat once more.

"I feel rather ashamed to fight with a woman," he observed, "but I haven't had any exercise lately, and my blood is getting stagnant."

"Well, if that's all that is the matter with you, I will soon circulate it for you," and Mlle. Belle smiled.

They then took their places.

Jim Gale, who was pretty well versed in fistic, was chosen referee.

The "Reverend" Fern offered to act as second for Deadwood Dick. Bug-Juice Bob acting in the same capacity for Mlle. Belle.

Then the fight began.

Jim-Jam Jake had by this time sufficiently recovered so that he could sit up and witness the battle.

Mlle. Belle led off with a left hander on Dick's ribs, that caused the detective to give utterance to a grunt.

This pleased the crowd.

If Belle only could lay out Deadwood Dick, their joy would be complete.

And it looked as if she was likely to do it, too, for she fought very gamely.

At the end of three minutes she had won the first round. She also won the second. And the third.

It began to look more and more as if Dick was in for a thorough defeat; and he began to think so himself, for he found he was standing up before the cleverest antagonist he had ever tackled.

Belle parried wonderfully well, and when she got in a blow it was a stinger.

By the end of the third round the detective began to feel rather winded.

The crowd was now greatly excited.

The betting was ten to one in favor of Made-moiselle Belle.

As yet, however, no blood had been drawn.

"I'll bet ther drinks fer ther crowd, and my old lame mare, that the feller gits licked!" shouted Jake, who, though always "broke," was the possessor of a skinny old equine that went on three legs, and was of no earthly use to anybody.

"I'll bet you my speckled hen that you are wrong!" accepted the "Reverend" Fern.

"It's a go."

The fighting had now become fast and furious.

Having obtained what she believed to be an advantage, the female "slugger" began to push the fight with all her might and main.

Dick realized this, and that if he did not hus-

tle he would be sure to get knocked out effectually.

Such a thing had never happened to him before, and he did not intend it should in the present instance. Accordingly, he shut his teeth hard and sailed in to do his work quietly and surely.

It soon became evident that Jim-Jam was liable to lose his superannuated old mare, and that the "Reverend" Fern would have a beast to convey him to any stray funerals and lynch picnics in the vicinity, for Dick showed such fresh strength and fresh courage, that all began to see that he meant to win if he had to kill his opponent.

She was a wonderful woman to stand the punishment she received, for when Dick got down to business he beat a regular tattoo upon her face, neck and shoulders and ribs.

Not one man out of ten could have stood up before such rattling as long as she did. Her flesh was seemingly as hard as adamant, for none of the blows in the face raised a swell or discoloration.

It was not until the tenth round that Dick brought matters to a close. With a terrific blow on the forehead with his right, and an under-cut with his left, he laid Mlle. Belle out upon the floor for repairs.

She was not insensible, but did not attempt to rise immediately.

"I give in beat," she owned. "You can have the championship of Gale's Camp, stranger!"

CHAPTER III.

THAT STRANGE NOTE.

THAT ended the "festivities" for that night, at Gale's.

No one else felt inclined to enter the ring, and, as for Dick, he was then perfectly willing to avoid another battle.

He had received, in this set-to with the Mountain Amazon, more solid thumps than ever before, and was pretty sore, even though he had won the mill; so he ordered Jim Gale to give him his room, and on being shown to it, retired for the night.

He was up early the next morning, however, before the usual crowd of bummers had assembled at the Mint, and taking advantage of the privacy thus afforded, proceeded to interview Mr. Jim Gale.

"Mr. Gale," he said, "I want to gain a little information about this camp."

"Yes? What do you want to know?"

"Is there a man here named Timothy Trevelylin?"

"Yes."

"What is his business?"

"Nothing in particular, except that he owns the best mine in the vicinity; and that ain't sayin' much."

"Hasn't he any other interests than this mine?"

"Not that I know of."

"Is he married?"

"He is."

"Any children?"

"One—Fred Trevelylin—a natural born loafer and scamp!"

Dick reflected a moment before making any further interrogations.

"How did he make his money, this Timothy Trevelylin?" he finally inquired.

"Well, you are asking me more than I can answer. He's got money, but he didn't get much of it out of his mine, for my mine is a better one than his, and I'll swear I've not made a fortune out of it."

"He must have some private source of income, then?"

"I reckon so."

"Does he gamble?"

"No."

"Or drink?"

"Yes, he's quite a boozier, but not much a patron of my place."

"Where does he live?"

"In the big shanty over on the hill—the one painted red."

"Thank you. What kind of a character is Mr. Trevelylin—cranky or otherwise?"

"Well, I reckon if you don't know him well, you will find him kind of otherwise."

"How so?"

"He is considered by his men to be the meanest man in the mines!"

"In what respect?"

"He's so infernal stingy! He would pinch a cent in two, in order to save one of the letters on it."

Having acquired this much information, Dick

went out for a walk and a general inspection of the town.

There was little to see.

There was a general supply store, maybe thirty shanty or cabin dwellings, a blacksmith's shop, four saloons, and the place where the "Reverend" Fern "held worship."

Then there was a dance hall, with bar attached; an ore crusher and several stables; and the coop where the "Reverend" Fern kept the hen that he claimed could lay as high as a dozen eggs a week.

The residence of Timothy Trevelylin, Dick found to be the largest shanty in the camp. It had several "L's," or wings, and unlike any other shanty there, possessed two stories.

Dick approached the place slowly, taking in all the points connected with it.

"So, here is where Tim Trevelylin is anchored, eh?" he muttered. "Well, Timothy, it strikes me that I shall have to make your acquaintance, if you have no serious objections."

Timothy evidently hadn't, for when Dick rapped at the door it was promptly opened.

"Mr. Trevelylin at home?" Dick asked.

"I am he!" was the pleasant reply. "Will you walk in?"

"Thank you; yes. I want to see you on a matter of business."

Dick was conducted into a little sitting-room, which, though rather roughly furnished, was as neat as wax, showing the hand of a good housekeeper.

Mr. Trevelylin gave Dick a seat on a stool, and then became seated himself.

"Now, stranger," he said, "I am at your service. Who are you, and what can I do for you?"

"My name is Bristol; better known through the Territories as Deadwood Dick."

"I have heard of you. You are a detective, if I am not mistaken?"

"Yes, that has been my avocation, hitherto, both as a matter of choice and a matter of duty!"

"What do you seek in Gale's Camp?"

"Employment."

"Humph! I guess you won't find much detective work to do here. There's nothing to detect, unless you try to capture a road-agent by the name of Silver Sal. If you can do that, you will make a nice little sum of money."

"I did not come here to engage in detective work. I came to seek other employment. Constant activity required in detective life, has made me a little tired of it, so I prefer a change, for a while."

"What sort of employment do you expect to get in Gale's Camp?"

"In a Tuscon paper I read that you wanted a superintendent."

"Yes, I did insert an advertisement to that effect. Do you come to apply for the situation?"

"I do."

"Have you ever worked in the mines?"

"I have not; but I have seen enough of mining life to be able to perform all the requirements of a superintendent, I think."

"Can you fight?"

"Yes, a little," smiling.

"Can you keep accounts?"

"I can, as well as many an experienced book-keeper."

"How much wages do you want?"

"All I can get, and as much more as you feel disposed to give."

"Well, I can't afford to give much, for my mine is not putting out much gold. Twenty dollars a week is my best figure."

"You must look for another man, then. I am not a twenty-dollar chap."

"No? Well, how much do you want?"

"Nothing short of fifty dollars a week will touch me, sir."

"Suffering monk! Do you want to ruin the mine entirely?"

"Not at all. If you want a good man, you should expect to pay for him. I'll wager you don't pay your present man less than what I offer to work for."

"That may be. But, I want to reduce expenses."

"Well, you can't do it by employing me, I'll give you a tip on that. I've named my lowest terms. Accept them or not, as seems best to you."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Trevelylin, after a moment's reflection. "If you will agree to exert your energies toward finding Silver Sal, the road-agent and robber, I'll give you your price. Will you do it?"

"I've no objections to that. What kind of looking person is this Silver Sal?"

"That is hard to say, for she always wears a mask that covers her face to the tip of the chin. She is evidently a young woman, however, and is of muscular build. She dresses in black, and rides a black horse."

"Where are her operations chiefly confined?"

"On the trail between here and Tucson. She has also committed thefts in this camp, and waylaid and robbed citizens. She has robbed me twice, and there is hardly a man in the camp who has not lost money by her rascality."

"What was her last offense?"

"Stopping Sheeny Mose, a peddler, and robbing him of his stock of watches and rings."

"When was that?"

"Last week."

"What was the last depredation she committed in this camp?"

"She held up Sam Sloop, the gambler who runs the faro game, and relieved him to the tune of four hundred dollars."

"When did this occur?"

"One night two weeks ago, when it rained like fury."

"Have you no suspicion who she is?"

"None whatever. She is a mystery."

"Has she ever committed a murder?"

"Not that I know of. Robbery appears to be her specialty, not blood-letting."

"Well, I will make an effort to find her, and if she comes around while I am here, the chances are large that I shall succeed in unmasking that mystery."

"If you do, I will reward you liberally; for, until Silver Sal is caught, I shall not know a moment's rest."

"How is that?"

"I stand in mortal fear of her. That she means me harm I feel sure."

"What causes you to suppose this?"

"Well, for two reasons: In the first place, she is a desperate character. In the second place, I have been receiving notices like this twice every week for the past six months."

He here produced a slip of paper and handed it to Dick.

It was as follows:

[FIGURE OF A DEATH'S HEAD.] "HORRIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE!" [FIGURE OF A COFFIN.]

"To T. T."

SILVER SAL."

"There! what do you think of that?" demanded Trevylin. "Isn't that enough to make a man feel uneasy?"

Dick laughed.

"Pshaw! no," he replied. "I wouldn't pay any attention to it."

"Have you never done anything to make some woman your enemy?"

"Never, that I can remember."

"There must be something of the sort, for I can't see why a stranger should send you such missives. Is there any particular day of the week for their coming?"

"Yes. The first one comes on Thursday, and the second one on Saturday. On the back of the latter is marked 'Sunday reading.' Rather comforting, isn't it?"

"Well, I suppose Silver Sal thinks you have an active imagination, and that if she supplies you with the key to a romance, you can figure out the rest of the story yourself," replied Dick, laughingly.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Trevylin, half-angrily. "These notices, or whatever you choose to call them, are meant for no such purpose. Silver Sal is plainly my enemy, for some cause that I cannot understand, and means to either murder me or drive me crazy."

"Through what source do you receive these billet doux?"

"Various sources. They mostly come through mails, but sometimes they are shoved in under my door at night, and sometimes during the day. I have even found them pinned to my coat-tails. How they got there passes my understanding. Truly, I am a haunted man."

"Well, all this is rather singular," Dick thoughtfully observed. "There must be something back of it. Surely no woman who does not know you, and has not some injury to avenge would be sending you these notices. She must have some cogent reason. Think back; have you not wronged or insulted some woman of vengeful temper, who would like to get square with you at all hazards?"

"I do not know that I have but one enemy on the face of the earth," Trevylin replied.

"Who is that?"

"The present superintendent of my mines."

"You have more than one mine, then?"

"Figuratively speaking, yes; I have two shafts that do not connect."

"What is the name of this man?"

"You are asking me more than I can tell you. He came to me for work a year ago, and I employed him. He gave his name simply as 'Mike,' and would give no other. He proved to be an able man, and I put him in charge of the other men."

"It was not long, however, before I found that he was a treacherous devil, who was trying to urge my men to rise against me and confiscate my property. On account of his dark skin, he became known as 'Mexican Mike,' although he is not a Mexican, by any means. There is some Spanish blood in his veins, though, or I am greatly mistaken. When he came here he had plenty of money, but he soon blew it all in. He did it among a crowd of miners, whose friendship he desired to gain. In this respect he was successful, and to-day I think the majority of them would follow him, if a mutiny were to occur, although I pay better wages and give better treatment to my employees than any one else in the camp."

"Is there any enmity between you and your son Frederick?"

"None whatever."

"Have you more than one child?"

"Yes; I also have a daughter."

"What is her name?"

"Fanny."

"How old is she?"

"Seventeen years of age."

"Then why did Jim Gale tell me that your son was your only child?"

"I cannot say. Gale and I are not on very good terms, because I do not patronize his bar or house."

Dick arose.

"When do you want me to go to work?" he asked.

"Call around to-night, and I will let you know."

"Very well. Good-day."

"Good-day."

Dick took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK INTERVIEWS BUG-JUICE BEN.

DICK'S impression of Mr. Trevylin was not as favorable as it might have been.

The mine-owner was not a man to inspire a person with any great degree of confidence.

His nervous manner indicated that something was preying on his mind—something more than the effect of those letters, or slips of paper, which he claimed to have received.

"There's a screw loose somewhere, and I'll bet on it," Dick mused, as he betook himself back to the "Little Mint." "Either Timothy Trevylin is an infernal scamp, or Jim Gale is one. I am rather inclined to believe Gale on one score, and Trevylin on another."

"Gale told me Trevylin has but one child, but now Trevylin asserts that he also has a daughter. It makes one of the two men a liar."

"Then, too, this road-agent story does not look as if it were true. However, I will investigate, and see if any one else is acquainted with Miss Silver Sal."

So back to the Little Mint he went.

Jim Gale, nor any of last night's crowd was present, except Bug-Juice Bob, who welcomed Dick effusively.

"Pardner, I am glad to see you so bright and bloomin'," he cried, extending his hand. "You're a Jim-dandy, you are!"

"Think so?"

"I know it! Ef I had a million, I'd stake it all on you."

"You'd be foolish, my friend. There's lots that can do me up brown."

"Not a one. I'll bet on it."

"How is your friend, Jim-Jam Jake?" asked Dick, with a smile.

"Oh! he's laid up with a headache. He got full after you left last night."

"Yes?"

"You bet! Along in the night he woke up, and what d'ye suppose he wanted to know?"

"Give it up."

"Well, he turned over to me, and he says, says he: 'Bob, whose mule was it that kicked me?' I explained matters to him, but he could not be convinced that a mule hadn't kicked him."

"He won't be likely to want to tackle Mlle. Belle again, I guess."

"You can bet your sweet life he won't!"

"Where is she to-day?"

Bug-Juice Bob stuck out his tongue, and felt of it in a sorry kind of way.

"Pard," he said, "my tongue is all parched."

Ef ye want me to answer any more questions, I shall have to have a drink."

"Certainly," Dick replied, presuming that he could get some information out of the fellow; "what will you have?"

"That which sootheth the troubled spirit, and steadyeth the trembling nerves—three fingers of whisky."

"All right, Bartender, give this man a square drink. I will pay for it," and it was given.

After emptying the glass, Bob set it down on the counter, and heaving a sigh of infinite relief.

"That was just like oil on troubled waters," he observed, rubbing his stomach and regarding the empty glass sadly. "What a sin and a shame it is, that every law-abiding citizen can't have a distillery of his own."

"It is rather hard lines," agreed Dick. "The undertakers would then have a show to make a living. By the way, are you prepared to answer a few questions?"

Bob felt of his tongue again.

"I'm afraid it ain't quite loose enough to do full justice to the occasion, pard," he said. "I reckon about one more bracer would limber it up so it would work like an eight-day clock."

"Give him another drink," ordered Dick, and it was furnished.

Robert "got away" with it with the same complacency that he had displayed in disposing of the first.

"Well, now, what is it you want to know?" he demanded.

"Where is Mademoiselle Belle?"

"I give it up. I opine she's got sick of Gale's Camp, and took a skip for parts unknown. Leastwise, I haven't seen anything of her since last night."

"Did you ever see her before last night?"

"No, I did not; never heard of her."

"Do you know Timothy Trevylin?"

"Waal, I rather reckon I do."

"What sort of man is he?"

"A rank old skin that everybody hates, even to the men who work for him."

"Has he got a daughter?"

"Yes, he's got a girl he calls his'n, but I never allowed that she is."

"Why so?"

"'Cause she is purty as a peach, and not a bit like him in her ways. There isn't a man in the camp who wouldn't go without his booze for a whole week, and run the risk of having the jim-jams, fer the sake o' one of her smiles."

"Is she in camp now?"

"Yes. I saw her not more than an hour ago."

"Have you ever heard of Silver Sal?"

"You can bet I have. She held me up once, and went through me; but, all she got was worth, at par value, about two bits."

"Do you know who she is?"

"No, nor nobody else."

"Did she ever rob Trevylin?"

"I'll give that up. I know that she has robbed nearly every person in the camp, and about every stage that ever came or went from here."

"Jim Gale told me that Trevylin had no daughter. How do you account for that?"

"Jim Gale is a liar of the first water."

"So—so!" mused Dick; and having acquired about all the information he was likely to get from Bob, the detective took his departure.

There were good-sized mines in Gale's Camp, and these were owned respectively by Jim Gale, Timothy Trevylin, and Abe Carter.

There were also a number of smaller mines, and a few placer claims, along the creek.

The total output of the three larger ones, in gold and silver, was about fifteen hundred dollars at each "clean-up."

For the safe-keeping of this, a big safe had been placed in the cellar of Sandy Severn's grocery; and Sandy was, by universal consent, made custodian of the wealth until the owners sent it to the mint.

Sandy was regarded as the most enterprising and exemplary young man in the town, and the few who had any money to put away were not afraid to trust to his honesty.

No one had ever thought of accusing him of appropriating the funds intrusted to his care, although the "bank," as it was termed, had been robbed several times.

Each time the crime was laid to Silver Sal, the road-agent, although there was no positive proof against her. She had been seen near the town shortly prior to the robbery, but that was all.

CHAPTER V.

SANDY IN TROUBLE.

WHEN Deadwood Dick left the Little Mint saloon, it was his intention to pay a visit to

Trevylin's mines and "size up" the crowd he was to be boss over—men presumably of various nationalities, the same as in most mines.

When he reached Sandy's grocery, however, he had occasion to pause.

An excited crowd was assembled in and around the store, and it did not take long for Dick to find out the cause of the excitement.

One of the depositors having use for some of his money, had applied to Sandy to get it out of the safe. On going to that receptacle, Sandy had found the door wide open and all the money and bullion gone.

Nothing was left for him to do but to give the alarm, and this was the cause of the crowd.

According to Sandy, when he had arrived at the store early in the morning it was closed the same as when he had left it the night before. The door was locked, and the shutters fastened down.

He had no suspicion that every thing was not all right, until he went into the cellar.

Sandy was a tall, well-built young man of twenty-five, with a pleasant countenance, reddish hair and mustache, and mild blue eyes. He had no appearance of being dissipated or rough. Indeed, he looked womanish, if anything.

Remarks were beginning to be dropped that these robberies were not committed by one person. Said one man:

"Et strikes me, sence ther store was found closed bang-up tight, that Sandy orter know suthin about how the robber got in, seein' he runs the shebang and carries the key. Don't ye think so, boys?"

"Gentlemen," spoke Sandy, "I am sorry for your losses, but as I am a living man, I know no more about who committed this robbery than you do yourselves."

"That's all bosh!" cried Timothy Trevylin, who came up just then, having heard of the robbery. "You are the proprietor of the store, the only one who carries a key to it, and the only one who knew the combination of the safe-lock. Who should be more accountable for the disappearance of the deposits than yourself, may I ask?"

"I closed my store and locked it up securely, at ten o'clock last night, and went home and to bed. I knew positively nothing of the loss until Abe Carter sent me for some of his money this morning."

"Bosh! that won't work. Silver Sal has no key to this store."

"That may be true enough, sir, but she is not the only person in the world," retorted Sandy. And there was such an amount of significance in his tone that it attracted the attention not only of Deadwood Dick, but of the crowd, and caused Trevylin to look queer.

Sandy continued:

"If I remember correctly, I bought this store and lot from a man named, so far as is known, Timothy Trevylin. I am not aware that his history, prior to his coming here, is generally known. At any rate, he came here with enough money to build this store. Most people, in building, provide themselves with two keys to the lock of each door. When I bought this property I got but one key, and that to the front door. It strikes me that I ought to have had two."

It was in the coolest manner that Sandy delivered this little speech.

There was no trace of fear upon his face, or in his voice. He evidently did not stand in awe of the gold king of Gale's Camp.

Trevylin was wild with rage.

"Curse you!" he roared. "Do you mean to insinuate that I, Timothy Trevylin, have a key to your store door?"

"I mean to say that I know no more about this robbery, sir, than you have already heard; and that you, sir, are just as likely to have a key to this store as Silver Sal, or any one else."

There was a murmur from the crowd that seemed to signify approval of the frank and manly way in which Sandy had expressed himself.

Dick was pleased.

He saw at once that Sandy was one of his own sort, one who feared no man.

"That fellow won't get hurt here if I can help it," decided the detective prince.

The last shot that Sandy gave Trevylin caused that gentleman fairly to quiver, so angry was he.

"Ten thousand curses upon you!" he cried. "I'll break every bone in your body for this insult. Do you know who I am?"

"No, nor any one else, if I'm not mistaken," was the retort. "I know you under the name of Trevylin, but your antecedents are mighty obscure!"

This was the straw that broke the camel's back, so far as Trevylin was concerned.

He made a rush for Sandy, but he fell short, for Deadwood Dick stepped between the two men.

"Let up, boys!" Dick cried. "There is no need of trouble. I am a detective, and if you will hold your horses I'll have this robber in a few days, and perhaps be able to restore your boodle."

There were numerous admirers of Dick from the previous night.

No man had yet come to Gale's who had dropped into favor so quickly.

The crowd cheered.

"Well, I reckon that is the most sensible argument," voted Abe Carter. "There is no use of having any trouble, before we know who the guilty party is, and where he is. Then we will settle the matter in short order. I, as one of the first citizens of Gale's Camp, make the motion that we employ the detective, who is well known, to ferret out the matter. His reputation is second to none in the country. Where he would be likely to win, we might fail."

"That is so," cried Bug-Juice Bob. "Hip! hip! hooray! for Deadwood Dick!"

The crowd cheered once more.

Timothy Trevylin showed his teeth viciously.

"I object!" he cried.

"On what grounds?" demanded Abe Carter.

"He is a stranger."

"That need make no difference."

"He is in my employ."

Dick turned upon Trevylin sharply.

"I never did an hour's work for you in my life, sir, nor did I ever receive a cent of money from you."

"Yet you cannot deny that you engaged with me."

"Nor do I. But, for certain reasons, I now see fit to throw up my engagement."

"I demand an explanation of this! I demand to know your reason!"

"Well, in behalf of the citizens of this town, I intend to find out who this bank-robber really is."

This interference of Dick's drove Trevylin almost wild.

At first he was evidently afraid of the prowess of the doughty Richard, and with a muttered execration he walked away a few paces; then turning, he yelled:

"If there is a marshal within a hundred miles of here, young man, I'll have you in jail before night!"

"Quite correct. Look out you are not there yourself, as you are most likely to be."

Trevylin walked away a few yards further, and sat down on a stump to await developments. It was plain he had struck a snag that was likely to give him trouble.

Sandy approached Dick.

"You are my friend?" he asked.

"I am no man's enemy until I find he deserves my enmity," was the reply.

"Do you propose to investigate this matter?"

"I do. You will help me?"

"All in my power."

"What is your opinion concerning this robbery?"

"Well, I hardly know what to say. Whoever committed it either has a duplicate key to the store, or else gained entrance with a skeleton key?"

"Do you think Trevylin has a key?"

"I am of that opinion."

"What is the principal cause of his enmity toward you?"

"That is more than I can tell, unless it is because I am in love with his daughter—or, at least, the girl he calls his daughter."

"Isn't she his daughter?"

"No. It may be that the cause of his enmity is that I know something of her true history."

"What is it you know?"

"I will tell you that at another time. For the present, let's devote our energies to investigating this robbery, for it isn't a very pleasant thing to be under the ban of suspicion."

"No, I should say not. How much money was stolen from the safe?"

"Close upon twenty thousand dollars, counting bullion and all."

"What kind of a safe is it?"

"One of Marvius's. It was closed by me, at six o'clock last night."

"Well, it is rather singular. Let me have a look at it."

"Certainly. Come with me and I will show it to you."

They entered the grocery, and descending a steep flight of stairs, they found themselves in

an unusually deep cellar partly filled with boxes and barrels.

Sandy lighted a lantern and conducted Dick into the presence of a large and substantial safe.

Many thousand dollars' worth of gold and silver could be stowed away in its capacious compartments.

Dick examined the safe carefully, but could not see anything out of order about the locks.

"The safe was evidently not blown or jimmied open," he observed. "Yet I cannot understand how it could be opened otherwise. Can you?"

"No, I cannot. I understand all the mechanism of the safe, and fail to see how it could forcibly be opened."

Dick took the lantern from Sandy, and made a thorough inspection of the cellar, Sandy watching him curiously.

Suddenly Dick turned to him.

"Who's got the biggest foot in Gale's Camp?" he demanded.

Sandy reflected.

"Well," he answered, finally, "I reckon it lays between two men—Tim Trevylin and 'Reverend' Jacob Fern. They both possess feet of enormous size. I don't know which has the largest."

"Well," asserted Dick, "I can give you a tip on one thing. One of those men is the robber. Look at this foot-mark. How about the size of it, compared with Fern's and Trevylin's boots?"

The bottom of the cellar was very moist, and any step of a man made an imprint.

There were quite a number of these visible, which Dick pointed out to Sandy.

"Has any big-footed galoot been in this cellar, to your knowledge?" demanded the detective.

"No, there has not. I raked it all over only yesterday, and left the floor clean and smooth."

Sandy carefully examined the footprints.

"Those are surely not Silver Sal's," he averred. "On other occasions when this and other places have been robbed, the imprint of a woman's shoe or boot has been found. But none like this."

"Are these footprints about the size you would take Fern's or Trevylin's to be?"

"I should say yes."

"What size foot has Jim Gale?"

"About a nine, I should say. These tracks are fourteens, if they are an inch."

"I guess you are right. I will see."

Dick took a tape-measure from his pocket, and kneeling, measured one of the tracks.

"You are a good guesser," he said, "but you are short. The man who made these tracks wears fifteens instead of fourteens."

"Holy Moses! You don't mean it!"

"It's a fact."

Sandy looked at his own feet, which were comparatively small.

"That proves that it wasn't me," he argued. "And yet no one has access here but me."

Dick's next move was a novel one.

He had a newspaper in his pocket, and he set to work to cut out of it an exact impress of the footprint.

"Now," he said, "I'll find the man who committed this robbery. Go and get four of your friends whom you can rely upon, and bring them here. I will await your return."

"What is the object in this?" Sandy inquired.

"I am a detective, and want witnesses to the performance of my duties in this line. I propose to nail the robber, within forty-eight hours."

"I see. Very well, I'll get several men who think too well of me to suspect me. You remain here, and I will return in a few minutes."

Leaving Dick in the cellar, Sandy took his departure.

Dick then undertook further research, but with little hope of finding any other clew to the robber.

He felt convinced that Trevylin knew more about it than any one else.

In rummaging about the cellar, he picked up a newspaper which was lying near the safe. It was a copy of the *Toronto Globe* of a recent date.

"Well, it strikes me I've found a clew," he reflected. "I wonder who takes the *Toronto Globe*, in this camp. This may lead to new developments in the case."

He waited impatiently for the return of Sandy, but he came not.

"Something is the matter," he muttered at last. "I don't believe it has taken all this time for him to find his friends."

He waited awhile longer, but his impatience became unendurable.

Was he made the victim of a plot?

No. He would not—could not believe it.

He regarded Sandy Severn as a straightforward man, and treachery on his part was out of the question.

Then he heard loud voices above.

"I am innocent, as God is my judge!" cried one.

"You can't come that racket over us any more," came another voice. "You're the robber, and there ain't no use o' denyin' it. You've got to swing same as any thief."

The first voice was that of Sandy Severn. The other was that of Timothy Trevelylin.

Dashing the lantern to the ground, Dick sprung up the stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRACKS IN THE MUD.

WHEN Dick reached the main room of the grocery he learned what the trouble was.

All the idle men in the camp, who could be assembled in so small a space, were congregated in the store, and Sandy Severn was a prisoner among them. They had a rope around his neck, and were about to hang him to one of the rafters.

Dick comprehended the situation immediately, and drawing his revolvers, he sprung to the front.

"Let up on that business!" he ordered. "I'll shoot any man who attempts to lynch Sandy Severn, for I have proof that he had no hand in the robbery."

"What kind o' proof?"

"Tracks in the mud!"

"That is no proof!" cried Abe Carter.

"Mr. Severn has informed me that no one has access to the cellar but himself. No one goes down there without his knowledge. Yet I have found the footprints of some one else in the soft cellar bottom."

"There's a thousand footprints there in the mud," cried Trevelylin.

"How do you know?"

"I had a big deposit in the safe; I've been down there many a time."

"Very well; but Sandy swept up the floor and raked out the dirt only yesterday, and the floor was clear of tracks after that."

This put a new face upon the matter.

"What sort of track is it?" Trevelylin inquired.

"Rather small," Dick purposely answered; "it may be a woman's. We'll have a measuring-bee to find out whose it is."

This raised a laugh.

"Biggest feet first," cried Bug-Juice Bob, who had just arrived on the scene.

"Well, what size do you wear?" asked Dick.

"I reckon about eights," replied Bob. "I never was big-footed, 'cause when I was a kid my mother wouldn't let me go bare-footed like the rest of the boys. Tell you who's got the biggest feet in this camp, though. That's Trevelylin and Parson Fern. They never wash their feet, an' et makes 'em grow like weeds."

"Will four gentlemen come with me into the cellar, and examine the footprints?" asked Dick. "They will then be convinced that Sandy is innocent."

Several men volunteered to go, among them Abe Carter.

They descended to the cellar, and Dick showed them the tracks in the mud.

Carter was a man of keen perception and good judgment, although in a case like this he was a very savage, with a thirst for lynching.

After surveying the footprints a few seconds in silence, he decided:

"They are not Sandy's tracks, I'll swear. There's been some big-footed galoot down here."

"And if you will release Sandy, I'll have the man within two days," vowed Dick.

"Sandy shall be released," Abe promised. "I am satisfied that he is not guilty, and when they find that I am satisfied, the rest of the boys will be, you can bet."

So they went up-stairs, and Carter addressed the crowd:

"Boys," he said, "I am convinced that Sandy is innocent. Them tracks ain't his'n, and I demand his release: as I believe that with the assistance of the detective here we will be able to nail the real culprit within a couple of days. Let Sandy go."

Carter was the most respected mine-owner in the camp. The crowd in the store were not all his men, but they respected his opinion just the same, and when he demanded the release of Severn the release was promptly granted.

"Now, boys," Carter went on, "clear the store. We want to hold a consultation, and maybe before night we shall be able to invite you to a *bona-fide* lynch picnic!"

This speech was greeted with applause, and

the crowd filed out of the place, the most of them making tracks for the Little Mint.

Sandy closed and locked the door, and then turned to Carter and Dick.

"Gentlemen," he said, with tears in his eyes, "I do not know how to thank you, or how to express my gratitude for your saving my life."

"You need not thank me," waved Carter. "You owe all your gratitude to your friend the detective, for it was he who saved your life."

"Come," said Dick, "let's proceed to business. This question of who is the robber must be solved, and I propose to solve it. Have you heard of Silver Sal lately?"

"No."

"Do you think she had a hand in this case?"

"No, I do not."

"Who is postmaster of this camp?"

"I am," replied Sandy.

"You don't get much mail?"

"No, not much."

"Some newspapers?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you know about who takes such and such a paper?"

"Well, yes, as a general thing."

"Who takes the Toronto Globe?"

"Timothy Trevelylin."

"Did he ever lend you his paper, or leave it in your store?"

"No."

"Then how came this paper in your cellar? I found it within a few feet of the safe."

And Dick produced the paper he had found.

Sandy took it and examined it.

"Why, this arrived by the Tucson stage only yesterday!" he exclaimed.

"Then how came it in your cellar?" demanded Dick. "Finding it there, proves conclusively that some one must have left it there. It couldn't have got there unassisted."

"Fact, by gosh!" cried Carter. "It strikes me hard in the back of the neck that you are on the right level. From finding this paper, you think that Trevelylin is the robber?"

"I certainly do. Perhaps I am doing the man a great injustice, but I can't help expressing my opinion."

Sandy turned to Carter.

"Do you know about what product Trevelylin's mines average a day?" he asked.

"No; but my own is one of the best shafts in the camp, by all odds, and it only averages two hundred dollars worth of gold a day."

"How about Jim Gale's?"

"He has got two shafts, and very likely that brings him above me."

"Well, since I have owned the grocery," declared Sandy, "and have handled the dust, I can tell you every ounce that has come into my care, and Trevelylin has taken the lead among the depositors, both in gold and in money. I have put in the safe for him several thousand dollars at a time. Could he have made such heavy and frequent deposits as a result of profit from his mines, do you think?"

"No, I can't believe that."

"Well," said Dick, "there seems but one thing to do. There is no doubt in my mind but that Trevelylin was concerned in the robbery. Still, it remains to be proven that he is the man, although everything seems to point that way."

"I've got a capital idea," said Sandy.

"What is it? That is just what we want."

"Well, old Trevelylin don't get drunk but once a week, which is of a Saturday night, at the Little Mint. On these occasions he always pairs with Fern, the preacher."

"Well, if I'm any judge, they ought to make a red-hot team," Dick commented.

"They do, when they get a-going. Both have big feet, and each claims the honor of the biggest."

"Well?"

"I know a man who has bigger. To-night is Trevelylin's night off. I'll get my friend to come down from Sacketstown, and you can make a bet with the parson that my friend has the biggest foot in Gale's. The parson will come in, and so will Trevelylin. A measurement will take place, and you will be the judge. You can then score a point."

CHAPTER VII.

TREVELYLIN ACCUSED.

THIS idea struck Dick as being a capital one, and he agreed to it.

Saturday night in the mines is nothing more or less than a midnight holiday, for every "galoot" who has money to spend does it in the most reckless manner.

This was the kind of "nicnic" Dick found when he visited the Little Mint that night.

The miners had drawn their month's pay, and there were all grades of men present, all ripe for fun.

It was early.

Sandy and his friend had not arrived, but they came soon after Dick.

Sandy's companion was a big, lumbering fellow, who looked able to "lick" a dozen ordinary men. And his feet—they were simply enormous! They were big—awfully big, if the man's stogy boots were any criterion.

"This is my friend, Mr. Whooper," said Sandy, approaching Dick. "Whooper, this gentleman is Deadwood Dick."

"How you vas?" greeted Whooper, who evidently, was German. "I vas heer some-dings about yous, und I vas glad vot I got acquainted mit you, ain'd id?"

"Mr. Whooper," returned Dick, "it looks to me as if you ought to be able to whoop-er up pretty lively. But, say, where did you get those feet? Why, man, I don't want to insult you, but I'll bet a hundred dollars in spot cash that there is not a man in Gale's who has got as big a foot as you have!"

"I will take that bet," spoke up the "Reverend" Jacob Fern. "Although I am well aware that it is sinful to bet, I stand ready to back my opinion, every time."

"I think I will take a hand in this, too," said Trevelylin, rising. "I'll bet I have got the biggest foot of the lot!"

"I will take you, too," cried Dick. "What do you want to bet?"

"A hundred."

"Taken. Whooper!"

"Yes, sir."

"Pull off those boots!"

Whooper sat down and pulled them off, and Dick measured them.

"Sixteens!" he announced. "The parson next."

"Here I am," cried the "parson." "Who will pull off my boot?"

"I will," said Bug-Juice Bob, "ef you will set 'em up."

"Ministers should not treat, sir; it is their business to be treated."

"All right, mister, then treat yourself to a boot pull!" and Bob turned away.

Accordingly, Mr. Fern had to pull off his own boots, which were considerably the worse for wear, having been mended and remended, until about all that remained of them was the patches.

Dick took the boot and examined it attentively. "Were you ever in Egypt?" he asked.

"No, sir, never. Why do you ask?"

"I didn't know but that you might have got these boots from some Egyptian mummy. They surely were never manufactured in this age."

"But they were, though. Them boots were made for me five years ago, and don't you forget it. I am proud of my feet, I am."

"Yes, I should think you would be, for they are a strong pair."

Dick measured them.

"Fourteens!" he answered. "Whooper has got the bulge on you. Now, Mr. Trevelylin, we will accommodate you."

"Very well, sir."

Trevelylin pulled off his boot. But, before giving it over, an idea seemed to strike him that there was some cogent reason for all this foot-measuring. What was the cause?

Was there any?

There must be!

"I think I'll back out of this bargain," he said.

"What for?" asked Dick.

"Because I don't believe it is a square deal," was the reply.

"You are afraid to have your feet measured," Dick taunted. "They probably smell stronger than the parson's, and his need to be disinfected, in order to prevent contagion."

This was the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak, for Timothy Trevelylin prided himself on his neat personal appearance above all else. He always wore a "b'iled" shirt, and a collar and necktie, and had his boots blacked—luxuries few other men in the camp thought of aspiring to.

So Timothy, in refutation of the detective's intimation, flung his boot full at Dick's head.

Dick caught it easily and measured it, and flung it back to Trevelylin, and turned to the crowd, saying:

"Gentlemen, I have made a discovery."

"Concerning the robbery?" asked Abe Carter.

"Yes. Sandy tells me that no one has access to his cellar but himself; yet Timothy Trevelylin was in that cellar last night!"

CHAPTER VIII.

TREVELLIN IN HOT WATER.

DEADWOOD DICK'S declaration created a decided sensation.

The charge was a serious one, in the face of the fact that Timothy Trevelin was one of the richest men in the camp.

Trevelin was pale with rage, when he heard the accusation.

"Curse you! for a meddling loafer! I'll cut your infernal heart out!" he roared. "I have never been in Sandy Severn's cellar alone since I sold the store to him!"

"Then please explain how your latest *Toronto Globe* came there. I found it near the safe only a few minutes ago."

"My *Toronto Globe*!"

"Yes, *your Toronto Globe*. You are the only one in Gale's Camp who takes it, and its the last issue that could have reached here by this time."

"Well, I can't account for that. The last I saw of it, it was lying on a table in the front room of my house. There may be some one else who takes the paper."

"Yours is the only paper that comes into Gale's camp from *Toronto*," declared Sandy. "I'll swear to that."

"You'd swear to anything," retorted Trevelin.

"I have got a better reputation for truth than you have," retorted Sandy. "You are a thoroughly built old rascal or I'm no judge of hulks."

"You might as well own up that you are the thief, Trevelin," said Dick. "Everything goes to show that you are. In the first place, when Sandy Severn bought the store from you, you yielded up but one key, where there should have been two. In the second place, the footprints in the muddy bottom of the cellar correspond in size and shape with your boot. There is no getting around that, for I have proof of it. In the third place, I found your newspaper, of the latest issue that could have reached this camp, in that cellar. If it is not evidence enough to convict any man, I don't know what is."

"It is not evidence enough to convict me!" cried Trevelin. "I am a gentleman not a thief."

He arose and essayed to leave the place, but a dozen resolute men barred his passage to the street, and Abe Carter was their leader.

"Don't be in a hurry, Tim," he protested. "Don't tear yourself away like a clerk would tear off a yard of calico. We would be sorry to part with you on such short notice."

Trevelin was now in a white rage.

"This is all a conspiracy!" he cried. "I am innocent, as God is my judge!"

"All the same it becomes my duty, as the case stands, to put you under arrest," announced Dick.

"Well, let's see you do it. The man who lays a hand on me, I'll put a bullet through his brain!" and as proof that he meant to show fight, he drew a revolver.

But, it was the worst act he could have done, for Bug-Juice Bob sprang upon him from the rear and wrenched the revolver from his grasp, and flung it across the room. Then he seized the arms of Trevelin and drew them behind his back, and in a second more Dick had the handcuffs upon the mine-owner's wrists.

"There you are," he said. "How do you like that style of cuffs, Mr. Trevelin?"

"I demand to be released," roared Trevelin. "This is an outrage and a shame! I can prove as soon as I am released that I was at home all last night."

"By whom?"

"By my daughter."

Dick turned to Carter and Sandy.

"Is the young lady's word to be trusted?" he asked.

"No!" cried Carter. "We will take no one's word in the face of the present proof. It is plain that Timothy Trevelin was in Sandy's cellar last night, and that he must have committed the robbery."

"It looks that way."

"Hang him!" cried the crowd.

"String him up!"

"Shoot him!"

These and similar exclamations rent the air, and it began to look as if Trevelin would swing from the limb of the most convenient tree.

And no doubt he would have hanged but for the interposition of Deadwood Dick.

"I do not counsel immediate violence, gentlemen," he said. "I want time to sift this matter further. The man, whether guilty or not,

should have the benefit of a most thorough investigation."

"Yes, that's so," echoed Sandy. "I approve of leniency, although the scoundrel has done all in his power to ruin me."

"Yes, I reckon that's reasonable," argued Abe Carter. "We will give the detective until tomorrow noon to look into matters, and then we will impanel a jury and try Trevelin. He may not be guilty, after all."

This seemed to suit the majority of the crowd.

"Yes, I approve of having a trial," coincided the "Reverend" Fern. "It is but just, and having been a lawyer before I became a doctor of divinity, I will conduct the case for the people as cheap as any other man you can pick up in Arizona."

"You wouldn't be a fit lawyer for a tom-cat!" cried Dick. "If I were hauled up for trial, I'd rather employ a Digger Indian for counsel."

"Thou art a sinful man," whined Fern, with a sad shake of the head. "I would not give much for your chance for going to the good place, when you turn up your toes."

"Tell you what I'll do," Dick returned.

"What?"

"I'll bet I'll have a pair of wings before you do. Will you bet?"

"I'll bet you will, too, once I get loose!" cried Trevelin. "There'll be bloodshed running wild in this camp, once I do get free."

"You haven't got free yet," chimed in the preacher.

"No, you old hypocrite! but look out for me when I do."

"Verily, I hope that may never be, for I want to buy me a new suit of clothes, and I am aching to preach some one's funeral sermon. If you ain't hung, I shall have to wait till the next horse-thief is caught, and I don't know when that will be."

"Why don't you steal one yourself, and attend your own funeral?" asked Bug-juice Bob. "We'll guarantee to lay you out in state, employ a hurdy-gurdy band, and shed tears over you until you imagine you are another Noah, and that a flood has struck Gale's Camp."

"There has been enough levity for this occasion," interrupted Abe Carter. "There is a strong room in the mill, where the tools are kept, and I propose we store Trevelin in there for the night, or until this case has been sifted to the bottom by Deadwood Dick. He is an expert detective, and has already found out much more than any other man here would have discovered. I believe he will ferret out the whole matter, and while Trevelin is under arrest on circumstantial evidence, it is our duty to hold him. It is a well-known fact that Silver Sal has been preying on this community for some time, and has committed a number of robberies. She may have taken in a partner this time."

"There's some logic in that," agreed Dick, "and I advocate that Trevelin be locked up until I have had a chance to investigate the case further."

"I second the motion," said Sandy.

So the matter was settled, and Trevelin's life was safe for the time being.

He was taken to the ore-mill, and locked up in a strong room, from which there was no escape, there to await further investigations.

CHAPTER IX.

SILVER SAL.

DICK did not accompany the party that took Trevelin to his temporary home in the ore-mill.

There was no necessity for it, as Carter and Sandy had charge of that work; but feeling like taking a walk, Dick set off down the trail toward Tucson.

It was a beautiful night. Arizona is particularly noted, in this respect.

On either side was a luxuriant growth of foliage, while beyond peeped up the gray peaks of several mountains.

Along the trail ran a rippling brook. The soaring full moon sent down her effulgent rays with regal splendor.

"What a night!" thought Dick. "Were it not for Sandy I'd get my horse and ride till morn. Ah, this is air, this is scenery—they knock the cities crazy!"

He wandered on for several miles, unconscious that he was getting so far from Gale's until he received a tap upon the shoulder.

He turned, and found himself in the presence of a young woman.

She was fair, so far as could be seen in the moonlight, and had a good figure. A diamond brooch at her throat reflected many brilliant rays; a cocked six-shooter in her hand reflected many more.

"Here we are," she greeted. "How do you do?"

"As well as I can," replied Dick. "Who are you, my gentle gazelle, if I may be permitted to inquire? Strikes me I have seen you before."

"Then it strikes you wrong. I am Silver Sal, the road-agent. I am out in quest of some boodle to-night. The drain upon my purse through my numerous charities is more than I can stand. I shall have to seek aid from other sources, in order to keep up my benefactions to the poor and deserving. How much of earth's wealth do you carry about your duds?"

"None, my gazelle. I deal in my own collateral, which sells at par; viz, brass pennies, of which my present stock consists of two. If they are of any use to you they are at your disposal."

"I am not dealing in old coins and curiosities," replied Sal. "What I want is *sugar*, and plenty of it. Do you understand?"

"I venture to say if you will repair to the grocery at the camp you will find a few barrels at your disposal," Dick unconsciously suggested.

Silver Sal had the drop on him, and this parley was in order that he might distract her attention, so that he could draw his own weapons.

But this didn't seem to work.

"No you don't," Sal observed. "I'm dead onto your little game."

"What game?"

"You want to pull a pop on me, but you can't do it. I'm as fly as you are."

"You don't suppose I'd attempt to shoot a gentle young fairy like you," retorted Dick. "If you ask me, though, I will tell you that the safest thing you can do is to put down that weapon and surrender; for if you don't there are plenty of trees around Gale's Camp that are itching to support such a noted form as you."

"The trees have not caught me, don't you know; nor have you, my gay detective. I'll tell you what I will do: Promise me on your word of honor that you will see that Timothy Trevelin is not arraigned for trial for the robbery, and you can go. Otherwise I'll blow your brains out. Silver Sal is not to be trifled with."

"Maybe not; but, I have not surrendered yet, nor do I propose to. Once upon a time I went for days and nights without food or water, and I can do it again. We'd better camp right down here, and I guess I can manage to starve you out. It is a lovely night, and just the kind to do a bit of wooing, you know."

Silver Sal regarded Dick with curiosity.

"Well, you're about the coolest cuss I ever run across!" she ejaculated.

"Is that so? How do you know but I was born on an iceberg?"

"It wouldn't surprise me. But, how about Trevelin? Are you going to let him go?"

"No."

"What are you going to do?"

"Hang him."

"He did not commit the robbery, and I will swear to it."

"Then who did?"

"Let me tell you one thing," said Silver Sal. "I have got the drop on you, and can kill you as easy as rolling off a log, and with as little compunction as an anaconda would gobble up a bird. Do you know that?"

"Well, I will take your word for it. You look like a truthful lass, and considering the noble profession you follow, I cannot doubt your word. It strikes me, however, that I might have a word to say about the matter myself."

"You have nothing to say. There is but one thing for you to do, and that ain't two. Tim Trevelin did not commit that robbery. This is the second time, is it not? that I have told you this."

"Well?"

"Do you want to hang an innocent man?"

"Surely not."

"But you propose to do so."

"Trevelin must stand his trial, the same as I should have to do were I in his position. The evidence against him is conclusive."

"Not at all. He is innocent. I am the one who collared that nice little boodle; and I will have more, as soon as there is enough to make it worth working for. So far as Trevelin is concerned, he don't know enough to rob a cat of its feed. He's a rank old duffer, and you can tell him so. You can go, now; but mind, if you look around until you are out of my sight I will let daylight through you as sure as my name is Silver Sal, the queen of the road!"

There was a brief silence, during which the two glared at each other.

"Go!" Sal ordered. "And in the future you will find it to your advantage to keep out of my

way. If you don't you will wake up some fine morning and find yourself missing. This would be too bad, too, for, having heard of you before, I believe you are considered a great national institution."

"Not quite so bad as that," replied Dick.

"Well, are you going?"

"Which way?"

"Toward Gale's."

"I haven't decided yet."

"I'll give you one minute—no more."

Dick saw that there was no use of parleying any longer.

It was humiliating to give in to a woman of this type—the very one he had set out to capture, but there seemed to be no help for it.

That Sal would shoot before she would surrender, there could be no doubt. She was plucky, and knew well what her fate would be if captured.

Dick walked back to Gale's.

CHAPTER X.

FERN GETS "RILED."

YES, the discomfited detective jogged back to Gale's Camp.

He looked around once, *en route*, but saw nothing of Silver Sal.

She evidently had taken advantage of her first opportunity to vanish.

It was a question in Dick's mind, now, just what to do.

Silver Sal had declared herself the robber. Was it done honestly, to save an honest man? or, under protection of a revolver, to shield a villain from the vengeance of the law?

This was another query that would have to be considered.

Who was Silver Sal? Was she Trevelylin's daughter? This did not look at all probable; but what was her motive for espousing his cause?

This was a riddle that bothered Dick sorely.

It was too late by this time to pay a visit to Miss Trevelylin, so Dick did not attempt it.

Early on the morrow would do just as well, he argued. He adjourned to the Little Mint, and there was soon engaged in a game of cards with the "Reverend" Jacob Fern.

The "Reverend" Jacob had been known to hold five aces out of a possible four, and was considered one of the best poker-players in the camp.

The first game was for fifty chips apiece, leaving in only as low as the sevens, instead of using the whole pack.

The value of the chips was one dollar each, and the game was "straight."

"I rather expect you will break me, Mr. Fern," Dick remarked.

"I shall try to," was the reply. "My church members have not been over-liberal of late, and I've not been able to put by as much money for missionary work as I ought."

The game began.

Dick soon found that he had met his match.

Fern was a bluffer, as also a good player, using excellent judgment.

He soon had Dick "cleaned out."

"Dick, you are out of luck," said the "Reverend" Fern. "Verily, the sinful never succeed in this world. Why do you not leave off your bad habits, and lead a new life. I've got four aces. Can you beat that?"

"I can. I have got a royal flush. Say, my good man, where did you get that extra ace?"

"I can't account for it. It came out of the pack, I will vow!" replied Fern. "Strangest thing I ever knew of. It must belong to another pack."

The card was examined, and, sure enough, it did belong to another pack.

"Look here, Fern," cried Dick, "you are a rank old cheat! For a cent, I would rap you over the head."

"Verily, young man, you would do nothing so rash as to hit a divine, I hope."

"I would be doing for you just what you most deserve."

"Well, my brother, while I fear you not, I will do anything you would have me do. What can I do for you?"

"Tell me who Silver Sal is."

"I do not know."

"Have you seen her?"

"Yes."

"Does she look anything like your daughter?"

"Bless me, no!"

"Or Trevelylin's?"

"Yes, she has something like her figure. I have never seen her face, for she always wears a mask to conceal her features."

"Is your daughter stout or slim?"

"Very slender."

"What is her age?"

"Eighteen."

"How old is Trevelylin's daughter?"

"Couldn't say. She's no chicken, however young she may look."

"Do you think Trevelylin had anything to do with the robbery?"

"No, I do not. In my clerical capacity, I am not supposed to suspect anybody. Say, I'll be hanged if I've got even a lone pair!"

Dick won the second game, the third, and the fourth.

By this time the "Reverend" Fern's capital was exhausted, and it was time to quit.

"I'm a ruined man," moaned the parson. "Many a funeral sermon I will have to preach before I recover those good dollars. Verily, the times are hard."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Dick. "Take me over to your house and introduce me to your daughter, and I will give you back the money I have won from you."

"Honest Injun?"

"Sure."

"It is a bargain. You'll find my Susan a nice girl."

So from the Little Mint the two proceeded to the residence of the "Reverend" Fern.

It was a nice place, of its kind.

There was a neat little garden, with a couple of flower-beds, and although the shanty was rather rudely constructed, the place had about as good an appearance as any in the camp.

Although the hour was late, Miss Fern was still up.

"Why, papa, I thought you were never coming home," she said, when the parson conducted Dick into the parlor. "I hope you have not been going wrong?"

"No, my child, I have not. I have been trying to teach my flock to travel in the path they should go."

"Did you succeed?"

"Alas, no. Satan ruleth to-night, and all my efforts were of no avail."

"I am so sorry," Miss Fern sighed.

In the mean time Dick was studying her.

In figure and face she had no resemblance to Silver Sal. Sal was stouter, and, if anything, better-looking. Miss Fern was very dark of complexion, and had dark hair and black eyes.

Dick was at once convinced that she was not Silver Sal. There was no resemblance between the two whatever.

Mr. Fern introduced Dick with an elaborate bow.

"Mr. Bristol, this is my daughter, Susan, dear, this is Mr. Richard Bristol, the detective. Kind Nature has made him an excellent man, as she has made you extremely beautiful. Verily, it seems to me that you two ought to make a match. I assure you, Bristol, that my charges for tying the matrimonial knot are as low as the lowest, and—"

"Papa!" the daughter interrupted, "what can you be thinking about?"

Dick laughed.

"Reverend sir," he reminded, "it takes two to make a bargain in the matrimonial line, and no matter how eager I might be for the honor you would confer, your fair daughter might be averse."

"You must pardon his thoughtlessness, sir," Miss Fern endeavored to apologize. "Papa's great fault is that he does not stop to weigh his thoughts and words before giving them utterance."

"She's right, Dickey," the "Reverend" agreed; "she's right every time. Susan is always right. I spoke too hastily. I will let matters take their natural drift, and if finally my services can be of any use to you in the—"

"Papa!"

Fern stopped short.

Perhaps we have not mentioned before that the "Reverend" Fern had a daughter. If so, it is late to mention it now, but a word of explanation may not be out of place.

Susan Fern claimed to stand in that affectionate relationship to the "preacher" of the camp.

She was slender and angular and freckled, but otherwise about as she has been described, except as to her age, which Fern always stated as eighteen.

She was thirty if a day. It had come to be remarked in the camp that "Fern's gal never got any older." She had been just eighteen ever since she and her father had drifted into the place and settled down.

Dick turned the conversation quickly, and spent a brief time at the Fern fireside.

He had gained the object of his coming there, and made his call a short one.

Susan Fern and Silver Sal were *not* identical. When he took his leave, Dick went back to the Mint, where he sought his room, and was soon in a sound and dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK VISITS MISS TREVELYLIN.

DICK was up betimes in the morning, and out about the camp.

The town was again in a turmoil of excitement.

During the night two more robberies had been committed, one being that of the Wells-Fargo Express-office.

Here the robbers had secured a handsome sum in gold, which was to have been shipped to San Francisco the next day.

On top of this came another sensation.

Timothy Trevelylin had escaped from the strong room in the mill, and was nowhere to be found.

How he had escaped was not apparent, the door of the room where he had been confined being found still locked.

He must have had outside aid.

"What is your idea?" asked Carter, when he met Dick.

"Plain enough," replied Dick. "Trevelylin is the robber."

"But how did he escape from that strong room?"

"He must have a confederate."

"But who is it? I don't know of any one to suspect."

"Silver Sal!"

"You really believe, then, that she had a hand in the robbery?"

"I do."

"In conjunction with Trevelylin?"

Dick related the circumstances of his meeting with Silver Sal the night before.

"Well, that settles it!" cried Carter. "There is no longer any question as to Trevelylin's guilt."

"No, I reckon not. Have you been to his house to see if he is there?"

"Yes. His daughter denies all knowledge of his whereabouts. She seems to feel sorely distressed."

"I think I will go and see her."

"No use."

"Why not?"

"She's as close-mouthed as a clam."

"I'll try her, anyhow," decided Dick. "Maybe I can open her mouth."

"Well, success to you; but I'll bet you don't succeed."

"If I don't, it won't be for want of trying. If Miss Trevelylin knows where her father is, I shall not be long in finding it out."

Waiting until it got a little later, Dick set forth. Whether he would succeed or not, he of course was in doubt, but he wished to see the young lady. He wanted to compare her with Silver Sal.

When Dick arrived at the Trevelylin residence, and rapped upon the door, the summons was answered by a prompt "Come in!"

Dick entered the neat little parlor.

Miss Trevelylin was seated in an arm-chair, engaged in sewing.

She was a comely-looking girl, of good figure and clean-cut features, and had black hair and eyes; the latter being particularly piercing in their gaze.

"Miss Trevelylin, I believe," Dick said on entering the room.

"Yes, sir. What do you want?"

"I want to find out where your father is," Dick announced, promptly.

"I don't know."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, I am; but if I did know I would not be apt to tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because it was through you that they shut him up in the mill. If he has escaped I am glad of it."

"Well he *has* escaped, and you know where he is. I command you to tell me."

"I do not know."

"You do!"

"I do not!"

"It was you who released him?"

"It was not. I have seen nothing of him since yesterday."

Dick eyed her a moment in silence. Was she lying to him? or was she telling the truth?

It was hard to say which.

Miss Trevelylin withstood the scrutiny well. She was not in the least disconcerted.

"Well," said Dick, "I'll go back and see what the boys say. I presume they will order your arrest. If they do, I shall have to carry out their wishes."

"They can't arrest me, for I have done nothing to be arrested for."

"You have refused to disclose the whereabouts of your father, and that is the same as shielding a criminal."

"My father is *not* a criminal!"

"Yes, he is. I will give you until my return to decide whether you will give him up or not. If you still refuse, the chances are that a rope will be brought into use, and that you will be at one end of it."

"Bah! I defy you all! You dare not harm an innocent woman."

"An excited mob dares to do anything. They are no respecters of persons. The present mob is greatly excited, and lynch-law is likely to prevail at any minute."

Dick departed, feeling that his visit had not been a success.

He had found out nothing more than he knew before, except that Fanny Trevlyn was not Silver Sal.

When Dick returned to the Little Mint he found the crowd still more excited than when he had left it.

All work had been suspended in the mines, and an angry mob was now gathered in the street, discussing the situation in terms more forcible than refined.

If Timothy Trevlyn had appeared on the scene at this juncture, he would have been strung up, without doubt.

There were two factions—one, that Trevlyn was guilty; another that it was Sandy. Ay! there was a third, for Jim-Jam Jake came along, and expressed it as his opinion that Deadwood Dick knew more about the robbery than any one else. He declared that he had seen him in the neighborhood of the grocery store on the night before, about midnight.

Jake's word, however, did not weigh heavily at Gale's Camp, where he stood as the champion bummer, and was known as the worst liar within a hundred miles. Consequently his story gained but little credence.

As soon as Dick arrived at the saloon he was approached by Abe Carter.

"Well, Bristol, how did you make out?" Carter asked.

"I didn't make out at all," Dick confessed.

"Did you see Miss Trevlyn?"

"I did."

"And she denied all knowledge of where her father is, I presume?"

"Yes, she did. You can bet your life that she knows, however."

"Well, if such is the case, what is to be done? Women are perverse things to deal with, unless you know just how to manage 'em."

"You're a married man, ain't you?"

"Well, yes, rather. I've been hitched up for a considerable number of years. However, in my experience I have always held the reins, and done my own driving."

"What's to be done?"

"Trevlyn must be caught."

"Must be caught and catching him are two different things. A bird at liberty beats two in a cage. Won't he have to come back to look after his mines?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"The girl is as capable to look after them as he is. She is a thorough business woman, and can boss a gang of men as well as the old man. Besides, Mike is there."

"Have you any idea where Trevlyn may be hiding?"

"No, I have not."

"Think he has left the camp?"

"No doubt of it. I have sent several men to search the surrounding country for him, but have little hopes of their success."

"I see but one thing to do."

"What is that?"

"Force Miss Trevlyn to divulge the whereabouts of her father."

"But, how the blazes are you goin' to do it?" asked Carter.

"With a rope," Dick answered. "I reckon when she gets one around her neck she will cave; don't you think so?"

"Well, I don't know but that would be a good idea. But, you know, you might as well try to drive a hog as to try to force some women."

"Very true; but I reckon when the Trevlyn girl feels the rope around her swan-like neck, and comes to realize that we intended to hang her, she will give in."

Carter shook his head.

"Doubtful," he said; "very doubtful."

"Why so? She surely wouldn't give up her life to save her rascally father?"

"I don't know about that. I know one thing, she has got the grit of a grizzly."

"That may be, but, it is all nonsense to say that any woman will court death from a desire to be brave."

"Well, in this case, maybe not, but some of them are as stubborn as a balky horse."

"Let us try the experiment. It may work. Just as a scare, you understand."

"I'll see what the rest of the boys say," and Carter went among the men and explained the idea to them.

It met with immediate approval from all hands, except one.

This was Sanay Severn.

"I seriously object!" he cried. "The idea is a barbarous one!"

"Your objection is overruled," shouted Gale. "If the gal knows where old Trevlyn is, and it is more than likely she does, she's got to tell. I allow by the time we pull up on her rope she will be glad to open her mouth."

"That's what's the matter!" cried Bug-Juice Bob. "I heartily advocate this motion. There hasn't been a neck-tie party in this hyer camp for several months, and it is high time we had a little jubilee. I've got a rope that will just about answer the purpose."

"Then get it, and we will set forth," decided Jim Gale.

"Hooray!" yelled the crowd.

Bob hurried away, and soon returned with rope strong enough to hang an ox.

"This will do the business," he yelled. "It's already hung a dozen persons, and is good for a dozen more. I have expected to have a trial at it myself before now, but have fortunately escaped. Jim-Jam Jake has the promise of the use of it, the next time he has 'em, and the rope is always for rent to any one as wants to use it."

"You will need it yourself before any of the rest of us," averred Gale. "But, come along, boys; Trevlyn's gal has got to open her mouth or swing."

"Hooray!" shouted the mob.

And with loud yells they set off up the single street of the town.

It boded ill for Miss Trevlyn.

CHAPTER XII.

ALMOST A LYNCHING.

WHEN a gang of Western miners become thoroughly aroused they are a bad lot.

As is well known, a murderer stands a better chance of getting off free than a robber or a horse-thief.

A man who has courage enough to kill another, seems to be regarded as a useful institution, if not a benefit to the rough community.

If Timothy Trevlyn was a thief, therefore, his daughter must be his confederate.

At least, so argued this howling mob who were going to string up the young woman.

Jim Gale led the gang.

Dick and Sandy did not accompany the crowd, but repaired to the grocery store to see if they could make any more discoveries connected with the robbery.

"I am sorry you set the crowd after that poor girl," remarked Sandy. "If she don't know where her father is, how can she tell?"

"I am confident she does know," answered Dick.

"How so?"

"Because she said she wouldn't tell if she did know."

"Quite natural. 'Most all persons would thus shield their parents."

"At the expense of their own lives? No, sir; not much! But, this is only to scare her, you know."

"I hope it stops at that."

"And I assure you it shall. I'll be on hand when they get her."

"She must not be harmed."

"That I'll vouch for."

A thorough search of the cellar revealed another link of evidence.

It was a bit of pink ribbon in the shape of a rosette.

Dick picked it up and examined it carefully, Sandy in the mean time watching him with the greatest interest.

"Have you found anything that will exculpate Miss Trevlyn?" he at length demanded.

"Well, I can't say as to that, but I have seen this ribbon before."

"Ah! where?"

"On the vest of Silver Sal, when I met her on the trail. If Trevlyn was here she was with him. There's no two ways about that. The two worked together."

"It does look so."

"I am sure of it."

"But, how about the second robbery?"

"The two must have been here last night again."

"That does not seem credible."

"Maybe not; but how else can this rosette be accounted for?"

"I don't know. You're sure it is the same one Silver Sal wore?"

"Positive."

"Then we've struck a new mystery."

"You bet."

"These robberies may account for how Trevlyn has made so much money," observed Sandy.

"Just my idea," Dick coincided. "I think there can be no doubt but that they worked together hand and glove."

"Your opinion and mine fully agree," asserted Sandy. "By the way, did Silver Sal look anything like Trevlyn's daughter?"

"No, not a bit. But, an idea has just struck me."

"What is it?"

"You saw Mademoiselle Belle?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, *she* strongly resembles Silver Sal in form. I could not distinguish the latter's features very plainly, but, somehow, it now strikes me that Silver Sal and Mademoiselle Belle are one and the same person."

"You think so?"

"I surely do. And, that being the case, we have but to find this woman to find Trevlyn."

"It will be about as hard to find one as the other, won't it?"

"I reckon so."

Leaving Sandy at the store, Dick started for the Trevlyn house to prevent the girl's being too roughly handled.

He felt, now, that Miss Trevlyn was not an accessory to the crime, and that she did not know where her father was.

If she did not, it would not do to punish her too far.

If Silver Sal and Trevlyn were in collusion, it was probable that Sal herself had released the prisoner.

In that case, it was likely they were together in hiding, and that Fanny really did not know where her father was.

When Dick arrived at the Trevlyn residence, the door had been burst open, and Miss Trevlyn was being led forth by Abe Carter and Jim Gale.

Dick was astonished to see the nerve she displayed, for she was perfectly calm and collected.

Bug-Juice Bob stood by with the noosed rope which he claimed had hanged so many persons, and a convenient tree grew in front of the Trevlyn house, with outspreading branches.

Miss Trevlyn was conducted under the shade of this, and the "halter" was placed about her fair neck.

"Now, then," asked Carter, "do you realize the peril you are in?"

"I realize that I am in the power of a band of the vilest ruffians on the face of the earth," was the cool reply.

"Your fate is in your own hands, young woman. To save your life, you have but to tell us where to find your father. Do this, and no harm shall come to you. Refuse, and we will hang you in his stead!"

"I have told you that I do not know!"

"But, we cannot believe that. It is a little too thin."

"I can't help how thin it is, it is the truth."

"Yet, you have said that if you *did* know where he is, you wouldn't tell!"

"Nor would I. He is my father, and I would never betray him, even were he a hundred times a robber!"

"Then you shall hang!"

"Be it so," replied Miss Trevelylin. "I am not afraid to die, for I have no sins to answer for."

At a signal from Carter, the loose end of the rope was thrown over a limb and seized by strong hands.

Still this fearless girl did not flinch.

Carter was about to give the word to pull her up, when Deadwood Dick stepped forward.

"Carter," he said, "this has gone far enough."

"And why so?" Carter demanded.

"Because I am convinced that the girl is innocent of any knowledge of her father's whereabouts."

"Your convictions be blowed! It was *you* who first set us onto her."

"True; but I am just as eager to vindicate her now, as I was to condemn her."

"Well, your vindication don't amount to shucks, my friend. The girl has defied us, and she must swing. All ready, boys?"

"All ready!"

"Then pull her up!"

The next instant the body of Miss Trevelylin was dangling in mid-air.

But only for an instant; for drawing a revolver, Deadwood Dick took deliberate aim and fired.

The bullet cut the strands of the rope; it broke, and Miss Trevelylin fell to the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK DARES THE CROWD.

THIS act of Deadwood Dick's brought a roar of disapproval from the mob.

But that did not frighten him in the least. He stood grasping his revolver, and it was re-cocked, and ready for use.

Abe Carter uttered a snarl of rage.

"The devil take you!" he cried. "What do you mean?—to thwart the ends of justice?"

"I mean that that girl shall not hang, sir!" replied Dick, grimly. "I'll kill the man who attempts to put the noose around her neck again!"

"Oh! you will, eh?"

"Yes, I *will*!"

"What will we be doing *at* this time?"

"You will be taking a drop to yourselves."

Carter uttered a snort of disgust.

"Why, darn your skin, there's enough of us to chaw you up bodily!" he raved.

"I am not afraid of you," Dick retorted.

"I'll kill the first man who attempts to draw a weapon."

Carter swore.

"You are not aware, I suppose, that your first shot would be your last!" he grated.

"No, I am not!"

The coolness of the detective was surprising to the crowd. Never before had they seen such an exhibition of nerve. Not a trace of fear did his handsome countenance betray as he stood there in the sunlight.

"Boys," cried Carter, "d'ye know what I'm beginning to think?"

"What?" demanded the "boys" in chorus.

"I'm beginning to think the same as Jim-Jam Jake—that this fellow Bristol knows as much about the robberies as any one else!"

"I rather reckon so, too," echoed Jim Gale.

"Verily, I feel sure of it!" vouchsafed the "Reverend" Fern. "Nothing is more probable than that he is a partner of Silver Sal's, and, as matters were getting pretty hot for her, she has sent him among us in her stead. Now, my brethren, it is a shame to spoil so auspicious an occasion as the present, which promised so much wholesome amusement for my congregation without corrupt-

ing their morals. It's a shame, I reassert. Besides cheating the boys, it prevents me from preaching a glowing discourse on the uncertainty of life and the necessity of remaining good, and never holding more than four aces at a time. My brethren, I propose that we let Trevelylin's girl go free, and hang this Deadwood Dick in her stead!"

"I second the motion!" yelled Jim-Jam Jake. "I'll agree to dig the hole to plant him in."

"And I will preach his funeral service for his money and clothes," added Fern.

"Well," remarked Carter, "that ain't a bad idea, for we don't want no detective around this hyer camp anyhow, do we, boys?"

"No, no!" cried the mob. "String the son-of-a-gun up!"

"That is a capital idea," agreed Dick, who had been listening attentively. "Some of you galoots just waltz right along and get me, while I let daylight through you. I haven't had the exquisite pleasure of killing a man in some time, and if I don't soon get a chance I shall get out of practice. Now is your golden opportunity, gentlemen, so sail in and draw a prize. I'm right at home, and the latch-string is hanging out more than a yard long!"

This little speech rather rattled the gang, even to Gale and Carter.

What kind of a customer was this Deadwood Dick, they asked themselves, who could hold a mob at bay?

Miss Trevelylin had risen and entered the house, no effort being made to stop her.

"Will you surrender?" demanded Carter.

"Certainly not."

"You'd better, or we will tear you limb from limb."

"You haven't got me yet. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched, for one is liable to be a Bengal tiger!"

Carter turned to his men.

"Boys, are we to stand here and be bluffed like this? Not much we ain't! Come! let's make a rush upon the cuss and overpower him! Ready! All together, now!"

But the order was of no use.

Not a man stirred.

"Come on, I tell you!" roared Carter.

"Are you a pack of cowards?"

"No, we ain't," returned Jim Gale, "but I reckon none of us is anxious to get perforated. I know I ain't!"

Dick had won a victory, for it was quite plain that none of the crowd would attack while he held the drop on them.

"You're a big lot of cowardly galoots!" yelled Carter, beside himself with rage.

"With your aid I can capture the fellow in a jiffy, and you can have the fun of seeing him kick wind."

"Why don't *you* tackle him?" asked Jim Gale. "You claim to be the best man in the camp."

"I don't claim anything of the sort; but, I will lead you on if you will follow me!"

"Can't see it," replied Gale. "The other boys can do as they please, but I've got a wife and children and five barrels of whisky to look after, and I can't afford to take any risks. Why don't you employ the Reverend Fern? He wants a job!"

"Oh, no!" cried Fern. "I am not feeling in an antagonistic mood!"

"Well, I'm tired of this," decided Gale, "and have no time to monkey around here any longer. I'm going back to the saloon and have a drink. If there's any one that is thirsty here, he is welcome to join me."

That settled it.

When Gale started off, one after another of the crowd followed him.

They had no time for hunting road-agents or robbers when there was anything to drink.

One by one they went away, until only Carter was left in the presence of Deadwood Dick

"Well, Carter, I suppose you intend to have it out with me alone," remarked Dick, with a smile.

"Curse you, no! You have got the bulge on us this time; but I will get even with you yet. I was not born to be made a fool of."

"Quite correct. You were not born to be made a fool of, because you were born a fool. You'll know that I never crawfish. I don't brag when I say that I never take water for any one. I don't care who he is."

"Never you mind. You're not out of the mud yet. The most sensible thing you can do is to get out of this camp and make for parts unknown, for if you remain here I'll give a thousand dollars but what you shall be lynched! D'ye hear?"

"I do, but I do not heed. And now, you listen to me: If you don't pick up your feet and get out of range of my revolver in the space of one minute, there will be a dead Carter for Fern to preach over. Come, now, get a move on you."

Carter was no fool. He saw a glitter in Dick's eyes that he well realized was the danger-signal.

Life was just as dear to Abraham Carter as it was to any other man, if not a little dearer; so giving Dick a vengeful glance, he turned and ran like a deer.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK IN THE DARK.

AFTER the departure of Carter, Dick left the vicinity of the Trevelylin house and wandered out of the camp to a motte of trees, where he sat down to consider what was the next best thing to do.

He was undecided whether it would be advisable to return to the Little Mint or not.

It might be the means of getting him into trouble that he could not get out of as easy as that just past.

He might not be able to hold the now boozy crowd at bay so easily again. He knew that they were against him, especially Abe Carter, who was rich and influential.

"After all," he mused, "what am I meddling in this affair for, anyhow? There's no prospect of my getting any money for my trouble, and a good prospect of getting into further trouble for my pains."

All of which was very true.

He had about decided to throw up the job and make tracks for Tucson, when something occurred that changed his mind.

A man, carrying a basket, passed through the woods within ten yards of him, without seeing him.

It was Mexican Mike, Trevelylin's mine-boss.

The basket was evidently a heavy one.

Where could the man be going? Dick asked himself.

"I'll bet my neck he is carrying food to Trevelylin!" he muttered. "Now I'll follow him and find out where he is going!" and with cat-like stealth he stole after the giant mine-boss.

Mexican Mike, dark and forbidding of aspect, passed through the motte, crossed the Tucson trail hurriedly as if afraid of being seen, and again struck into the woodland that covered the slope of the mountain.

"Aha! I think I am on the right track now!" Dick muttered. "Trevelylin is hived in some mountain cave, and is having his meals served *a la Mexicano* instead of *a la carte*. Steer on, Michael, my bucko! I'm after you!"

Michael, unconscious that he was followed, finally wearied of climbing the steep ascent and sat down upon a rock.

Raising the lid of the basket, he took out a bottle which was evidently filled with whisky.

He took a long pull at this, emptying the bottle, half a pint, and then flung the bottle away.

"Ah! I feel better now!" he said, aloud.

"I reckon I will resume my journey. If I'm not mistaken, it can't be far off."

"If it ain't," muttered Dick, who had overheard the foregoing utterances, "I will soon have my game nailed."

On they went.

The mountain grew steeper and more rugged and difficult of ascent. The forest became so dense and dark, too, that Dick found it hard to keep Mike in view.

All of a sudden Mexican Mike disappeared altogether.

Dick hurried forward and carefully searched the vicinity where he had last seen the man, but failed to find any signs of him, or to detect where he could have so suddenly vanished.

There was no cabin or shanty in the neighborhood, nor was there any sign of a cave.

"Well, I'll be blowed if this don't beat me," Dick muttered. "The chap disappeared right here, and I don't believe he went any further."

Dick went back to the spot where he had last seen him, and made another search.

But with the same result. No clew was found.

The heavy forest made it so gloomy that the most experienced woodsman would have found great difficulty in picking up a trail.

Dick threw himself upon the ground and meditated.

What was he to do?

He did not want to give up the trail at this stage of the game.

He felt sure that Mexican Mike had gone to carry food to Trevylin, and that Trevylin was secreted not far off.

The air of the forest, though cool, was pine-scented and comforting, and while Dick drifted into a reverie, he also drifted off into a sound sleep!

It was something new for him to go to sleep on the trail, but he did on this occasion, and, no doubt influenced by the stillness of the place, he slept for hours, as he believed, for when he awakened it seemed to be in the depth of night.

He sat up and gazed around, but could see nothing, and the bed on which he had lain was exceedingly hard.

He put his hand down on what he supposed to be the leafy, mossy ground, only to find that it was solid rock.

Then it flashed into his mind that he was a prisoner in some underground place, whether it was cave or dungeon he could not decide.

His hands were not bound, nor were his feet, and he stood up.

His clothes were damp, and, groping his way to the wall, he found it dripping with moisture.

The air in the place was heavy and oppressive.

Dick had a boxful of matches in his pocket, and after repeated efforts he managed to ignite one, and by this a number of others. In this way he was enabled to define his surroundings.

He was in a sort of stone-walled cage, to which there appeared to be no outlet.

"Well, by Caesar!" he exclaimed, "I'd like to know where I am, and how I came here! Have I been walled in here to starve? It looks like it. But by whom? Trevylin, or Silver Sal, perhaps."

A further search resulted in no further disclosures.

There was no door, no window. The sides of the dungeon were of solid rock, while the ceiling was of black stone, proving that there must be a compartment above.

But it was high up, and there was no means of reaching it.

The only piece of furniture in the place was a grinning skeleton in one corner, which was not a pleasant object to behold.

Dick's matches were soon exhausted, save two or three.

Loth to sit down on the reeking floor, he

stood up, and darkness once more reigned supreme.

It was a position not calculated to excite the envy of any one.

"It looks as if this is destined to be my last adventure," Dick mused. "They say good luck can't follow a person always, and I guess mine is gone. I don't think I will ever see the light of day again."

But he did not despair, quite.

An hour's standing in one spot makes a person more tired, of course, than a long walk, and Dick was at length forced to move around.

In doing so, he stumbled and staggered against a portion of the wall.

He did not fall heavily, but it struck him pretty forcibly that the wall *moved*!

It didn't seem credible that such a thing could be, so he paused and lit another match—one of the last ones in his possession.

By its light he was able to see what he had not discovered before.

The part of the wall against which he had accidentally lurched was seamed with fissures. In one portion was a big square stone, against which he had stumbled.

It was moved outward an inch.

Dick blew out his match.

"I think I'm on the verge of a discovery," he mused, encouraged.

He placed his eye to the crevice and peered through.

Although the stone fitted pretty snugly in its place, he could still detect a glimmer of light from the other side.

"Hope always—despair not," he muttered.

He applied his ear to the crevice, but heard not a sound.

Then he gently pushed upon the stone, and it yielded a little.

He pushed, then, with all his might, and the stone went through and dropped on the other side.

A hole was thus made about two feet square.

The aperture thus made was large enough to admit of the passage of a man's body.

Beyond the wall, all Dick could see was a room and in its center stood a stool on which stood a candle.

There was a ladder, however, which ran up to an opening in the top.

"Well, this is a little more appetizing," Dick mused, "for there appears to be an outlet to somewhere, anyhow."

He felt for his revolvers, but they were gone.

"Hang it, that is bad. I've nothing to defend myself with, except my fists," he muttered. "There's no telling what kind of hornets' nest I may run into."

Although his revolvers had been appropriated by his captor, his money belt, which he wore under his shirt, was intact.

After a little more deliberation, Dick squeezed himself through the aperture into the next cellar or underground chamber as it really was. Apparently it had been utilized by some one for a secure hiding-place, and the room in which Dick had been thrust was doubtless a storage place for plunder as well as a prison, so Dick concluded. In this second chamber, much to the detective's delight, were various articles of use, among them a bunch of pine torch-sticks, which seemed to show that there would be use for them in getting out of that hole.

Taking one of the best of these Dick soon had it lit, and then began an ascent of the ladder. He had quite a distance to go, for the ceiling of the underground room was high. He reached the top to find an opening about four feet square.

The daring Dick did not hesitate but, thrusting the torch before him, lifted his head and shoulders above the floor and gazed around.

All was darkness and silence, and the place was evidently wholly untenanted.

Dick clambered up through the hole, and found himself in a room similar to those from which he had just escaped, except that the walls and floor were not so damp.

Curious shaped stalactites pended from the ceiling, and a few bats flitted about.

A narrow passage led from this chamber, the walls of which were covered with carvings of hideous faces and strange hieroglyphics, showing the handiwork of Indians of some extinct race.

Dick followed the passage.

It was narrow—very narrow. In some places he could scarcely squeeze through. But he pushed on determinedly.

It was his belief that the passage was the outlet of the cavern chambers, and that escape was before him for the working for it.

His surmise was correct.

After following the winding of the passage for several minutes, a cry of joy escaped from his lips.

Ahead was a glimmer of light!

He pushed forward faster.

In five minutes he came to the end of the passage, and paused.

It opened upon the mountain-side and into a clearing.

In the center of the clearing was a house, or cabin, built partly of logs and partly of stone.

It was large and roomy.

Probably it had been built by some mountain ranger, who had deserted it, or else by some prospector whose claim had petered out.

It was not deserted now, however, for a man sat on the door-sill, engaged in smoking a pipe.

It was none other than Timothy Trevylin, and beside him, leaning against the wall, was a rifle.

He evidently intended to defend himself against all intruders.

The clearing was a small patch, and the door of the cabin looked toward the up-hill side of the mountain.

If Dick left the mouth of the cavern, he could not well help being seen by the man in the door.

This he did not want to happen, as it would put Trevylin on his guard.

This must be avoided, for Dick was aware that if he captured the man at all, it must be by strategy.

Just what plan he must resort to to secure his game, was as yet a puzzle to him, so he sat down in the mouth of the passage to watch and meditate.

It would not do to attempt an open attack. He was unarmed. He must wait until night before he could hope to accomplish a capture.

Night was yet a good ways off, and Dick was hungry.

Trevylin continued to occupy the door-sill, and puff away at his pipe, and after awhile, to Dick's surprise, Mexican Mike came out of the cabin, sat down beside the mine-owner, and they had a long chat together.

Then, when they seemed to have come to an understanding, Mexican Mike arose and crossed the glade and disappeared in the woods.

"He's going back to Gale's Camp now," muttered Dick. "I shall have one the less to contend with. If Trevylin is the only one at the cabin, I'll have him a prisoner before another day passes."

But Trevylin was not the only one left at the cabin, for, a few minutes after the departure of Mexican Mike, a woman came out of the cabin.

It was Silver Sal!

She had discarded her semi-male attire, and now appeared in full feminine array.

Dick had a good chance to study her features, and discovered that his surmise was correct. She was the same one he had

"knocked out" at the Mint; she was Mlle. Belle!

She, too, indulged in a chat with Trevelylin, and appeared considerably excited, for at times Dick heard her utter angry exclamations. Trevelylin listened to her, but did not seem to have much to say.

"I wonder what Sal is on her ear about?" Dick queried. "Something evidently has gone wrong, or she wouldn't be so excited. Maybe she and Trevelylin have been having a row."

It did look a little like it, and after a half-hour's conversation, she too crossed the glade and disappeared in the forest.

"Ah! that leaves Trevelylin entirely alone, I think," reflected Dick. "If so, you are mine, Mr. Timothy Trevelylin. I'll take good care that you don't escape from custody this time, my festive bank-robber! It may be that by leading you back to Gale's with a halter around your neck, the hot-headed citizens of that place won't think so harshly of me."

Now that Trevelylin was, to all appearances, alone, Dick made up his mind to try and effect a capture before nightfall.

To escape from the mouth of the passage unseen, he allowed, would be the hardest part of the job.

Once he could attain the rear of the cabin, he was satisfied that he could manage things all right; but the puzzle was to get there without being riddled with bullets.

CHAPTER XV.

TREVELYLIN GIVES IN.

In the glade, or clearing, were plenty of blackened stumps, and there were some last year's tall grass and weeds still standing.

It was only by lying flat upon his stomach that Dick could hope to get to the cabin unseen.

It was a big risk, but he decided to undertake it, come what might.

So, dropping flat upon the ground, he crept from the mouth of the passage, and pursued a roundabout route, in order to reach the cabin from the rear.

He expected to hear a bullet whiz past his ear any minute, or else feel one enter his flesh.

But he was in luck. He was not discovered, and reached the rear of the cabin in safety.

Here he stopped to brush the dirt from his clothes and listened.

He heard no sound of Trevelylin's stirring, but he did hear another sound that caused him to prick up his ears. It was like a snore, and it came floating around the corner of the cabin.

"Hello! what's that?" and he seemed astonished.

Again he heard it.

"By Jove! I'll bet Trevelylin has taken too much booze, and has fallen asleep! I must find out."

With the stealth of a cat he stole to the front of the cabin and peered around the corner.

Trevelylin was still seated on the doorsteps, but was fast asleep!

Whether it was from excess of drink or not, Dick of course did not know; but one thing was sure, the mine-owner was having a good, old-fashioned snooze, with his head propped up against the door-jamb.

"Ah! now I have him!" thought Dick. "If he don't wake up, I'll soon have the pleasure of escorting him back to camp. The first and most important thing is to get possession of that gun and his other weapons. But, that is a ticklish job."

And so it was, but the daring fellow did not shrink.

When convinced that Trevelylin was not feigning sleep, he stole around the corner and approached the sleeper, who was snor-

ing in stentorian notes, with his mouth wide open.

His hands were not in such a position that they could be handcuffed. Besides, Dick did not have a pair of bracelets with him.

He, however, first secured the rifle, and then, standing off a few paces, leveled it at Trevelylin and cried, loudly:

"Awake, old snoozer!"

The effect was electrical.

The mine-owner opened his eyes and sprung to his feet.

He glared at Deadwood Dick as if he could not believe the evidence of his senses.

"You here!" he gasped.

"I am here, and on deck! Phenix-like, I have risen from the tomb to which you consigned me. Hands up, or I will put a bullet through you. There will be no fooling this time. Up with your hands, I say!"

"Never!" yelled Trevelylin, game to the last; and he reached for his revolvers.

But he did not get them, nor did Dick shoot; but, with a lightning stroke he laid Trevelylin out unconscious on the ground.

Entering the cabin he found pieces of lariat; with these he securely bound Trevelylin's hands behind his back. Then he made a noose in one end of a long piece and put it about the mine-owner's neck.

Next, he totally disabled him, and sat down on a boulder to await the result.

Trevelylin, a man of strong constitution and indomitable will-power, soon aroused, and sat up and glared about him.

"Where am I?" he demanded.

Then his eyes rested upon the author of all his troubles.

"Curses on you!" he cried. "That rope is not for my neck! Take it off!"

"Not just yet," replied Dick; "that would not be according to my law, you know. Are you ready to confess your crimes, Trevelylin?"

"No; for I am not guilty."

"Then arise, shake the wrinkles out of your socks, and turn your face toward where the sun usually rises. You have got to go back to Gale's Camp for trial."

"For God's sake, have mercy! Think about my poor daughter, and how she must feel over this terrible disgrace."

"She did not appear to be much put out about it, as I could see. I saw her strung up, but she would not give in."

"A true Trevelylin. Nor will I. You can take me back to Gale's, you infernal devil; but you will find me game to the last, halter or no halter. Silver Sal was the one who did the robberies."

"With your aid?"

"No."

"Then what were you doing here in her company to-day?"

"She rescued me and brought me here. Knowing the ban of suspicion under which I was laboring, she believed she might be able to make me her accomplice."

"You accepted?"

"No, never! I'd rather go back and take my chances of being lynched. If you will tell the boys what I will tell you, I think they will believe that what I say is true."

There was something so appealingly honest about Trevelylin's statement, that Dick was inclined to give credence to it.

"Who is this Silver Sal?" he demanded.

"Alas! she is my own child by my first marriage—the child of the wickedest woman ever born on the face of this earth! She inherits all the tough traits of her mother, whom I will admit that I shot, through sheer desperation. I served a term of six months, and escaped. The mother taught the girl, as she grew up, all the tricks of thievery, warning her never to leave my trail, until she had inflicted on me all the misery possible. Then my first wife died, but not without first having implanted the seed of sin in the girl's heart; and she has followed her mother's commands."

"When she first came to these parts, hav-

ing followed me everywhere I went, I thought I might stave off this vendetta against me, so I made myself known to her and tried to induce her to lead a better life. Instead of that she turned upon me, and made me literally her slave. I have lost as much by her as any one else, if not more; and even though she is my own daughter, I will no longer raise a finger to shield her from justice, for the disgrace she has brought upon me."

"How about the bootmarks on the cellar bottom?"

"They are Mexican Mike's. It was upon learning of his being a pal of my daughter's that I advertised for a new mine-boss in the Tucson paper."

"Well, Trevelylin, I feel rather inclined to believe your story," admitted Dick, "and if you will tell it in a straightforward way to the citizens of Gale's when we get there, I have no doubt but that they will give it credence. I will do what I can for you."

"Thank you. But, do you think they will give me a chance to tell my story? You have already got the rope around my neck, and, I go to Gale's Camp, under arrest."

"If you will promise to walk along with me without trying to escape, I will remove the halter from about your neck," Dick returned.

"Certainly; I promise."

Dick removed the rope, and they started.

"Where did Silver Sal go to when she left you to-day?" asked Dick, as they trudged along.

"To her retreat, I suppose."

"Why, isn't the cabin her retreat?"

"No. She would not be safe there for any length of time, as the cabin is frequently occupied at night by mountaineers."

"Where is her retreat, then?"

"In a bit of a hut, constructed among the leafy branches of a gigantic oak tree, in the densest part of the forest, where no one would think of looking for her. If the crowd let's up on me, I will direct them where to find her."

"Good! That will be a feather in your cap, if you tell them so. But, where does Sal keep all of her ill-gotten booty?"

"That is more than I can tell you."

"She caches it, maybe."

"Probably."

Little more was said, that had any bearing on our story, on the way back to the camp.

They arrived there at early dusk, just as the dying sunlight was glinting the mountain-tops and the lamps were being lighted.

When Dick and Trevelylin approached the Little Mint, a crowd immediately assembled in the street, uttering loud cries.

As soon as they came to within a few paces of the crowd, Dick and Trevelylin paused.

Dick had Trevelylin's revolvers handy, in case there should be any trouble.

"Gentlemen of Gale's Camp," he called out in a loud distinct voice, "I have brought Timothy Trevelylin back, a prisoner, in repayment for what you would have done for me in the way of lynch-law. I hope, however, that you will give Trevelylin a hearing, and after you have heard him you will be satisfied, as I am, that he is not guilty. He has been made the victim of Silver Sal, his own villainous offspring, and if he is granted immunity from punishment, will show us where to find her, as he does not longer propose to shield her from justice. In behalf of Mr. Trevelylin I beg that you allow him to speak."

"Waal, we'll hear what he has to say for himself," said Abe Carter, "tho' I allow no one will believe him, or you either. I'm sure that I won't."

"You are not the only man in camp," retorted Dick. "Go ahead, Trevelylin, and tell them your story."

Trevelylin began, and repeated what he had told Dick in a simple, straightforward manner, and with apparent candor.

Some of the audience appeared to believe the statement, while others were inclined to disbelief.

In conclusion Trevelylin said:

"Gentlemen, I have shielded Silver Sal from the clutches of justice, to my own peril, but will do it no longer. I have another daughter—one who has stronger claims upon my affection. You can believe what I have told you, or not, as you choose; but I have told you the truth, and nothing but the truth.

"There is something I have not told you, however, and it is this: Silver Sal and Mexican Mike are not the *only* ones concerned in these robberies. There are two men right in this camp who were associated with them. Their names are Fern—the Reverend Jacob Fern, and Abe Carter!

"Now, gentlemen, I have told you all. I am at your mercy."

"That story won't wash!" sneered Abe Carter. "I, for one, don't believe a word of it. I say the cuss shall swing! If we don't enforce law and order in the town now, we will never have it."

"Hold your horses, Carter!" cried Jim Gale. "You are not the only man in the camp who has got a say. Trevelylin shall have a show for his white alley, whether he is guilty or not. What do you say, boys?"

"Hurrah!" cried a chorus of voices. "He shall have fair play!"

"What I propose," said Gale, who was popular among the "boys," "is this: There seems to be a difference of opinion as to the advisability of hanging Trevelylin, so I suggest that a vote be taken to determine whether he shall swing or not. What do you say?"

There was a hearty shout of approval.

Abe Carter evidently concluded it was not best to make any further protest, lest he should get himself into trouble.

A hat was passed around by Gale, and each man present deposited therein a slip of paper with "Yes" or "No," according to whether he was in favor of lynching Trevelylin or not.

Nearly all the male element of the town was present, so quite a big vote was polled.

Jim Gale then proceeded to count the votes.

"Gentlemen," he demanded, when he had finished counting, "are you willing to abide by the decision of the ballot?"

"We are!" was the hearty response of the crowd.

"Then, gentlemen, Trevelylin goes free. There are twenty more 'nays' than 'yeas.' Detective Bristol, you can set Mr. Trevelylin at liberty."

Dick promptly obeyed.

As soon as he was free, Trevelylin turned and grasped Dick by the hand.

"My friend," he said, with visible emotion, "I thank you. My gratitude is too great for further expression. You have saved my life. You shall not leave Gale's Camp unrewarded."

"I don't expect any reward," Dick returned. "You are lucky to get off as you have, for you certainly have had a narrow escape. Take my advice about one thing: In the future, curb that irascible temper of yours, for it is liable to get you into trouble. And when a stranger drops into town, don't pick him up for a flat, for nine times out of ten you will get left."

Glad to escape so luckily, Trevelylin turned and hastened toward his own house.

Jim Gale now lectured to the crowd.

"Boys," he said, "on three occasions we have set about to have a nice little lynch picnic at the expense of some one, but on each occasion we have been disappointed. But now Trevelylin has thrown a new light on the case, and we know the ones to swing; and there ain't goin' to be no monkey business about it, either. We're goin' to have a grand old glorification that will do credit to Gale's

Camp, and hand it down in the pages of history.

"Mexican Mike is the first chap we want to dispose of. I've always suspected him to be a villain, and now we know him to be one. He dies first. Then there's old Fern, the detestable hypocrite; we will accommodate him as Number Two. Then we will see about Carter's case; and that done, we'll organize an expedition, and, under the lead of Trevelylin, go for Silver Sal. But before we begin operations, I propose that Abe Carter, Parson Fern and Mexican Mike be arrested."

The crowd gave a yell of approval that could have been heard a mile away in that rarefied air.

Jim Gale had added another feather to his cap of popularity.

A delegation of ten men was selected to go and fetch in Mexican Mike, while the crowd looked after the other precious pair.

Mike lived on the outskirts of the camp, and seldom entered it except to go to the mine, as he was unpopular, and probably had not a friend in the place.

Dick went into Sandy Severn's grocery.

"Ah! how are you?" greeted Sandy.

"What's all the yelling about?"

"They're going to lynch Mexican Mike."

"And Trevelylin? I saw you bring him into camp."

"He is acquitted."

"Do you think Mexican Mike had anything to do with the robberies?"

"I certainly do. Trevelylin has given the whole business away. Silver Sal, Mexican Mike, and Fern and Carter are the guilty ones, and they are all bound to swing."

"From what source does Trevelylin derive his information?"

"It appears that Silver Sal is his own daughter by a first marriage. It was she who rescued him from imprisonment, in hopes that she could make him one of the party. It appears that she is a crook of the worst kind, but being his child, Trevelylin hated to give her up, as 'most any father would."

"That's so. But, what surprises me the most is that Fern and Carter are mixed up in the matter, considering that Fern is a minister and Carter one of our solid citizens."

"Minister be blowed! I set him down for a rascal the first time I saw him, and I don't believe he ever saw the inside of a church. Carter is no better than he."

There was no further time for conversation just then, for loud yells announced the approach of the gang who had been sent after Mexican Mike.

Soon they passed the grocery, with flaring torches, and Mike was a prisoner in their midst.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

In the mean time the crowd had been howling for Carter.

They had secured the "Reverend" Fern, but Carter had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

Mexican Mike and Fern were locked up in the ore-mill, and a guard was placed over them, to insure their safe-keeping till they were wanted.

It had been the intention of the crowd to hang them immediately, but it was finally decided to hold them over till morning, by which time they hoped to have Silver Sal and Abe Carter.

It was decided, too, not to set out after Silver Sal before morning.

The night was dark and a thunder-storm was impending.

Deadwood Dick did not agree to this, but he was overruled. He argued that Silver Sal would be beyond their reach by morning. Carter had no doubt struck a bee-line for her

retreat, would warn her of the danger, and together they would decamp.

But Trevelylin and Jim Gale thought otherwise. They believed that Silver Sal considered her retreat unknown, almost, and that he, Trevelylin, would not disclose it. He therefore assumed that she and Carter would remain in hiding there for a day or two, when they would gather up their ill-got riches and drift quietly away.

Finally the approaching storm decided the matter, and Dick was, as said, overruled.

Gradually the camp quieted down and silence reigned unbroken all the night long.

Early next morning, a party under the guidance of Trevelylin, set out from Gale's to capture Silver Sal.

Dick did not accompany them. His work was done, and he somehow wished that he had had nothing to do with the affair at all.

It seemed rather singular, too, that a father should lead a band of desperate men against his first-born child.

The party who had thus set out from Gale's had had their hearts and souls tried by the robberies, and there was no hope for Silver Sal if they found her.

When they reached the vicinity of the place where Silver Sal had her retreat, Trevelylin said:

"Boys, I do not care to go further, as I do not want to witness what is about to happen. I can direct you, so that you will have no difficulty in finding the tree. Follow this bear-path for about a quarter of a mile, and you will come to a big oak tree, about the base of which the bark has been removed. In among the dense foliage of this tree, near its top, in a hut, you will find Silver Sal—if she is at home."

"Trevelylin, we can't ask more of you," said Gale. "You can remain here, or return to the camp, just as you choose."

"I will return," was the sad reply; and turning, he strode rapidly away and was soon lost to view.

"Now, boys, forward, march!" cried Jim Gale. "We've got a nasty job to do, and the sooner it is over, the better. I want it done quickly and quietly, and no nonsense about it. I reckon after we have disposed of Sal, there will be some peace around these parts."

"You ain't got her yet," reminded Jim-Jam Jake; "and I'm of the opinion you won't get her."

"A fig for your opinion," retorted Gale. "We'll have that girl, either dead or alive!"

Thus they marched on up the toilsome mountain-side.

In about ten minutes they came to the tree that Trevelylin had described. It was a monster of its kind, with many leafy branches, which were interwoven with those of the surrounding trees. The bark at the base of the tree had been peeled off, and the trunk was so big that no one could "shin" up it.

But there was no need to climb the tree, for the trail ended at its base.

On the ground lay Silver Sal and Abe Carter, dead!

Both had weapons in hand, and both bore the marks of the use of them. They had fought to the death, probably up in the tree, and together had fallen to the ground to die.

Gold and bullion were scattered around, proving that they had fought over the gain of their evil deeds.

"Well, boys, it's all over with 'em," observed Jim Gale, "and I ain't sorry. To tell the truth, I really had some compunctions about hanging ther gal, had we found her alive."

"What's to be done with 'em?" asked one of the party.

"We'll bury 'em right here. If Trevelylin desires to do anything with the gal afterwards, he can. Finding 'em as we do proves the truth of his story, and our work is nearly done."

They fell to work, and with their knives hollowed out two graves.

It was a slow task, but it was finally done. The body of Silver Sal was deposited in one, and that of Carter in the other, and then both were speedily covered out of sight.

That done, the gold and bullion were picked up, and the tree was scaled by means of a rope ladder that was found overhead.

In the thickest part of the foliage was discovered a small, rude hut, and there was found the remainder of the stolen treasure, as well as proof that Silver Sal and Mlle. Belle had been one and the same person.

Back to the Camp went the party, and the two prisoners were speedily brought out for hanging.

In front of the Little Mint was a tree, well-known to all who had dwelt any considerable time in the camp as "Jim Gale's 'lifter.'"

To this tree Mexican Mike and Jacob Fern were hurried.

There was little ceremony.

A score of resolute men had them in charge, and they knew that it was all up with them. Still, they did not quail, but held their composure in a manner that excited the admiration of the hardest man in the crowd.

The rope was placed around the neck of Mexican Mike, and thrown over a limb, and then seized by only too-eager hands, but before they could draw him up Jim Gale stepped forward.

"Let up a minute, boys," he said. "Mike, have you any message to leave before you go?"

"None!" was the stolid reply.

"Any wealth you want to leave behind for your friends?"

"No."

"Any prayers to make?"

"None."

In another moment Mexican Mike was swinging in mid-air.

Fern came next.

But, like Mexican Mike, he was stolid and indifferent. There was not the twitch of a muscle while the rope was being put about his neck.

After it was on, he said:

"Now, wait a minute, boys. Give a man a few minutes to deliver a few words before he goes. I am not a coward. Before I go, I wish to ask a favor."

"What is it?" demanded Jim Gale.

"That you won't see my gal come to any harm."

"Granted."

"Now, beloved brethren, let 'er flicker!" and Fern was strung up without any further ceremony.

Little more remains to be said.

Papers among the effects of Abe Carter and Jacob Fern disclosed how the safe had been opened so easily. By some means they had procured duplicate keys, and Silver Sal had done the work, helped by one or the other of them on different occasions, or by Mexican Mike.

The town was well rid of them all, and peace reigned.

Susan Fern finally married an honest miner. She was not Fern's daughter, as it came out, but the daughter of one of his brothers—an honorable man.

Fanny Trevylin and Sandy Severn eventually joined issues for life, and are happy together and are doing well.

Deadwood Dick took an early departure in quest of pastures new. He had come to this town with the intention of engaging in mining for a season, as a means of recreation, but had failed to break away from detective adventure even there.

THE END.

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